

BREAKING GROUND



REACHING OUT TO OTHER CULTURES

A BREAKING GROUND SERIES



[6] IN MEMORIAM



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Cover Photo by Pat Hart

1st row: Carole Moore-Slater (director), Megan Hart (outreach & training coordinator), Karin Lopez (volunteer trainee from Mexico),
2nd row: Alexander Santana (multicultural coordinator), Cecilia Melo-Romie (community outreach Spanish coordinator), Carolina Meyerson (Spanish services coordinator), Angela Bechtel (information & referral coordinator), Tracy Pendergrass (information resource coordinator), Aram Torabian (part-time Kurdish case manager).

CONTACT INFORMATION



This free publication is produced six times a year by the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Research on Human Development and Kent Communications Group. Subscription requests, change of address, and submissions for possible publication should be directed to: *Breaking Ground*, Council on Developmental Disabilities, 404 James Robertson Parkway, Suite 130, Nashville, TN 37243. phone: 615-532-6615.

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Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities Grant Number 1-03999-1-0. Authorization Number 339371, July 2001. 5,600 copies. This public document was promulgated at a cost of \$.46 per copy.

REACHING OUT TO OTHER CULTURES

A BREAKING GROUND SERIES

BY LESLIE HARTMAN AND NED ANDREW SOLOMON

In September 2004, Tennessee Disability Pathfinder and the Council on Developmental Disabilities received an 18-month grant from the Administration on Developmental Disabilities to develop a pilot program for Spanish-speaking individuals with disabilities and their families. At the time, conservative estimates indicated that Latin American immigrants comprised about 40% of the immigrant population in Davidson County, and this group was growing rapidly.

“We were aware that accessing service systems often involved a complicated process for any individual or family member,” said Carole Moore-Slater, director, Tennessee Disability Pathfinder. “So, when you added language barriers and cultural barriers, we knew that navigating the service delivery systems for those families would be even more difficult.”

The original plan was to have a part-time Spanish-speaking Outreach Worker located with Catholic Charities at the Woodbine Community Organization in southeast Nashville, an area with a large number of Latino residents. The purpose of the project was to assist underserved Spanish-speaking individuals with disabilities and their families by increasing their knowledge of available disability services and community supports while improving access to available programs.

At that time, Pathfinder had a bilingual social worker in its office who had worked with fewer than 75 individuals in a 36-month period. “In the first year of this project, with a part-time worker with office space in the Woodbine community,” said Ms. Moore-Slater, “we identified 180 Spanish-speaking individuals with disabilities needing disability and community services.”

Clearly, having an office in a community center and collaborating with other staff at Catholic Charities and Woodbine Community Center was a crucial factor in effectively reaching out to the Latino community. “We had no limitations in terms of the type or resident status of families we worked with, so remaining open-minded and non-judgmental played a part in the success of this project,” said Ms. Moore-Slater. “Staff remained concerned and interested in helping children with disabilities and their families.”

Pathfinder’s philosophy was, and is, to teach families or individuals with disabilities how to access systems when seeking specific services. It soon became evident that the biggest barrier to access was the lack of bilingual providers at many agencies who would be able to communicate with individuals in Spanish. As a result, Pathfinder established Camino Seguro, a database of bilingual providers. Today, Camino Seguro is managed by agency partners in all three grand regions, enabling the resources to be available and accessible statewide. Currently, the network has identified 152 bilingual providers.

As the numbers served and the needs have increased and expanded, Pathfinder’s Spanish Outreach Program has grown each year. The staff has worked with numerous families and made many contacts with bilingual providers across Tennessee. “This Latin Outreach team has taught the rest of us at Pathfinder about the importance of community networking, especially if an individual needs a specific service,” said Ms. Moore-Slater. “They seem to know every Spanish-speaking provider around!”

The concept of community networking is certainly exemplified by Pathfinder’s Spanish parent support group. Staff member and psychologist Carolina Meyerson, from Argentina, now leads two to three support groups a month, with an average number of 25 individuals participating in each group. More than 75 parents have participated in at least one group activity this year.

Besides Ms. Meyerson, Pathfinder multicultural outreach staff includes Cecilia Melo-Romie, a Partners in Policymaking™ graduate and business woman from Chile, Alexander Santana, a special education teacher and speech therapist from Cuba, and Aram Torabian, a bilingual part-time outreach worker to the Kurdish and other Middle Eastern cultures.

In 2009, Ms. Meyerson and former Pathfinder staff person, Claudia Avila-Lopez, received the Association of University Centers on Disabilities Multicultural Council Leadership in Diversity Award, along with Luisa Ramirez de Lynch from the University of Tennessee Boling Center in Memphis.

Pathfinder is continuing to explore ways to identify individuals and families who need services. Its “Multicultural Program” includes the Hispanic Outreach Project, the Kurdish Project, and Pathfinder’s efforts to conduct outreach to other refugee and immigrant communities. Most recently, staff has worked with a mother from Egypt and a gentleman from Somalia. “We are also trying to work more collaboratively with Meharry Hospital to work with underserved families, including African-Americans,” said Ms. Moore-Slater.

Ms. Moore-Slater concluded with, “Tennessee Disability Pathfinder has been offering services throughout Tennessee to people with disabilities and their families regardless of background. It is important to gather information and learn about cultural perspectives and issues that might impact working with families in the community and to identify bilingual resources, regardless of the language, and network in the refugee and immigrant communities.”

Leslie Hartman completed an internship with the Council on Developmental Disabilities and graduated from Lee University in May.

Ned Andrew Solomon is director of the Partners in Policymaking™ Leadership Institute for the Council.

2010 YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM



Photos by Mildred Sparkman and Lynette Swinford

BY NED ANDREW SOLOMON

The four days passed quickly, but were filled from morning till night. Fourteen Student Delegates—high school students with disabilities from across the State—gathered on Vanderbilt University campus to learn to speak up for themselves and to talk about their plans for life after high school.

The students attended sessions about leadership, self-esteem and self-advocacy (Marc Elliott, national keynote presenter), getting ready for the working world (Sara Ezell, Project Opportunity), taking charge of their healthcare and educational decisions (Julie Sullivan, Family Voices of Tennessee, and Loria Richardson, The Arc of Tennessee), college resources for students with disabilities (Corrinne Lankford, Vanderbilt University), participating in the legislative process (Representative Glen Casada) and challenges and successes on the road to independence (YLF graduates).

Besides attending information sessions and participating in extensive small group discussions, the Student Delegates visited the Capitol, performed in a talent show and a drum circle, filled out a Personal Leadership Plan, and generally immersed themselves—with a high degree of sophistication and independence—in life on a college campus.

And...best of all...the Student Delegates had outstanding YLF graduates—Tabitha Burns, Michele Adams and Christian Darnell—as volunteer staff to show them the way and to give them the confidence that they can take on leadership roles too.

We at the Council are very proud to welcome the following students into the YLF Graduate network:

Sabrina Black, Gleason

Melissa Costello, Pulaski

David Follett, Huntingdon

Codi Heuer, Woodlawn

Danny Janisse, Franklin

Hailey Lawson, Smyrna

Hardin Manhein, Memphis

Spencer Mayhan, Mt. Juliet

Christopher "CJ" McKinney, Clinton

Tevin Murphy, Jackson

Ryan Pittman, Spring Hill

Maria Tatman, Medina

Dylan Toombs, Murfreesboro

Robert Wells, Madison

Ned Andrew Solomon is director of Partners in Policymaking Leadership Institute for the Council on Developmental Disabilities.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"I learned about standing and speaking up for myself."

"The people around me liked me, and they made me really glad to be alive."

"The worksheets helped me get my thoughts into words."

"The discussion groups were inspirational and eye-opening. It felt like people cared what I had to say."

"Everyone was great, and did not judge me due to my differences."

"It's nice getting a taste of college life."

"Nice to look at what I already can do, and what I need to do."

"The discussion in group was the best part of group."

"The small groups were really fun because there was a lot of discussion."

"I learned that I have the ability and capability to have an effect on my community. I feel more confident than when I came. And because of everyone here, staff and my fellow Delegates, I have learned that I need to relax and just be myself..."

"The biggest thing I learned was Marc's lesson that tolerance goes both ways. Because I'm not very tolerant of people sometimes."

"It helped me learn to be prepared for college."

"I learned how it was, living independently."

"I learned to speak up for myself, plus to have a say in the decisions that affect me."



YLF





REMEMBERING LANA KILE

*“Some people are always grumbling
because roses have thorns; I am
thankful thorns have roses.”*
Alphonse Karr

Photo by Christy Wells-Reece



After working together and traveling together for so many years, I feel almost kin to Lana. In sharing our histories, we learned that we grew up in the same north Memphis neighborhood, our mothers both worked at the old St. Josephs Hospital, and we probably would have gone to the same schools if the Americans

with Disabilities Act had been passed 50 years sooner.

Lana was diagnosed with Pott’s disease as a preschooler. She spent weeks immobilized in the hospital at a time when visitors weren’t just discouraged, they weren’t allowed. Her mother could only visit her at prescribed times. Lana overcame that.

Lana graduated from Shrine High School where the curricular offerings were somewhat limited. She majored in business, a lucky choice for those of us who depended on her good management skills at work. During her early school years, she took a pretty bad fall playing basketball. This injury ultimately led to the use of leg braces. She overcame that.

Lana married; she told me about her wedding dinner at Anderton’s restaurant—we used to eat lunch there sometimes. She had a beautiful baby girl. She began her career at United Cerebral Palsy; she had to use crutches, but she overcame that.

Dr. Jordan, founding director of the University of Tennessee (UT) Child Development Center, hired Lana and her career began at UT. She was using a wheelchair at that point. I remember thinking often that Lana worked harder getting ready to come to work than most of us did at work. But she overcame that.

Lana drove hundreds of miles for many years on I-40 from Memphis to Nashville. A mistake was made when the State named that stretch of road Music Highway; we all knew it was really the Lana Kile Highway.

Lana was fiscal manager at the UT Boling Center for Developmental Disabilities when she retired after a career of almost 40 years. She served on the Memphis Center for Independent Living Advisory Board and was its treasurer for more than one term. She was recognized by Governor Don Sundquist with the Governor’s Trophy Citizen of the Year. The Mid-South Arc named her Employee of the Year in 1996.

Lana was a role model for perseverance and maintaining a cheerful outlook. She was competent, loyal and a true friend. She is a person who could have chosen not to strive past the adversities of life, but she was a fighter. She overcame.

For the past two years, Lana probably suffered more physical pain than we knew. She told us she was tired—and had every right to be. I am so thankful that God let her enter Heaven quickly. I am even more thankful that God let us have Lana for 68 years.
—Carolyn Gibson, former assistant director of the Boling Center for Developmental Disabilities

Lana Kile served as fiscal manager for the Boling Center for more than two decades, but her influence far exceeded the realm of budgets, fiscal reports and grant writing. Lana is remembered by her colleagues and friends as a woman of many abilities and talents.

She was incredibly knowledgeable about the complex and often mysterious administrative workings of the University. She could resolve very real problems with a phone call, an e-mail, a quick piece of advice or, when necessary, sustained hard work.

Lana had wonderful interpersonal abilities, abilities familiar to all who met her. Her gentle sense of humor, uniquely sparkling smile and unforgettable laugh put people at ease and drew out the best from all. Lana was a true leader, not with flashy charisma, but with a genuine personal commitment.

Lana was resolute and crystal clear in her advocacy for people with disabilities. But, when her world would not or could not accommodate, Lana could adapt and move forward without compromising her values or personal dignity.

Lana taught me much about the value that insights and life perspectives from living with challenges can confer on an

individual. She is a model for many of us. We miss her.—*Fred Palmer, director, Boling Center for Developmental Disabilities*

Lana Kile was nominated for appointment to the Council by former UT Boling Center director, Gerald Golden, MD. She became Chair of the Council in 1993 and served during some of the most volatile years for the Council, helping to increase its visibility and resources, and leading an extraordinary executive committee that began to define the Council.

Lana led meetings with several commissioners as we sought to redirect the Council resources and priorities in ways that would strengthen our impact in Tennessee. She was a consummate professional, a strategic thinker and a brave person. She was joyful and a positive thinker. She loved her family above all—her daughter, grandson and close cousin. I miss Lana's presence on this earth but will always benefit from her contributions.—*Wanda Willis, executive director, Council on Developmental Disabilities*



REMEMBERING GLEN BARR

It is a Great Honor to have this opportunity to provide reflections on Glen Barr as a person with a significant disability, co-worker and mostly as a friend.

Glen was a loving and devoted husband, proud parent, person committed to improving the lives of individuals with disabilities and a person who could bring life and laughter to what might seem a hopeless situation.

I met Glen around April of 1997 during a Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) meeting and later visited with him in his Jackson office. Initially, this was the smallest Center for Independent Living (CIL) in the State, however, over time, Mr. Barr would transform the JCIL into the largest.

During our visit, I could feel the energy and see the beauty glowing from this man as he discussed his vision of making the community a better place for all persons with disabilities. That glow never changed. He was most successful in integrating interpreting services for the deaf under the JCIL umbrella, which was not being done in other states.

Glen was appointed to several boards and councils by the governors of the State of Tennessee. He served as chair of the SILC, which was a proud accomplishment for him.

He often spoke of a proud tradition, and below are excerpts from statements made by Glen Barr.

"The day my oldest son became a Law Enforcement Officer, he became a part of a proud tradition. I told him, everything you do now reflects on every policeman who ever was and will ever be. The day my youngest son became a Marine, he became a part of a proud tradition. I told him, everything you do now reflects on every Marine who ever was and will ever be. My daughter works in health services. She is aware of the importance and proud tradition of her profession.

"It is the same in the disability community. People with disabilities have a proud tradition. In every area we have excelled; Presidents, actors, businesses, politics, public services and athletes. Our attitudes and actions reflect on every person with a disability who ever was and will ever be."

Glen Barr dedicated his life to helping people with disabilities after his accident. We will miss him but he will always be a legend in our time for standing up for the rights of all persons with disabilities. The JCIL Board of Directors is in the process of renaming the Center in honor of Mr. Barr. The new name will be the Glen Barr Jackson Center for Independent Living.—*Samuel E. Cole, program manager, Tennessee Division of Rehabilitation Services*

Between the years 2005 to 2007, I really had not done too much with my life and I had very little self-confidence. But, late in 2007, I had the privilege of meeting Mr. Barr, and within a short time I realized that I had met a positive male role model. Mr. Barr and I met a few times both in Dyersburg and at JCIL where he worked. Seeing him work at JCIL, as well as the other people who worked there, inspired me and showed me that just because you have a disability does not mean that you have to be constrained and confined at home.

In 2008, I returned to school and even did a speech on Mr. Barr and how he had affected my life. One of the highlights of my time with him was that Mr. Barr chose me to be Consumer of the Year at JCIL because I was pursuing higher education. I will miss Mr. Barr and his positive attitude, because he was always happy and encouraging.—*Brady Heidenreich II, Dyersburg*

I met Glen Barr in 1990 at the STAR Center's first Assistive Technology 'Tools for Life' Day. He came in early and stayed until it was done, getting to know the STAR Center team and welcoming people from his home town community in Dyer County. In the next 12 months, STAR staff did an outreach day in each West Tennessee county and Glen volunteered for every one of them. He also brought that same commitment of his time and experience as a member of the STAR Center's Board of Directors.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8 →

In the early nineties, he traveled with my staff and me to several national assistive technology conferences. At one of those conferences, Glen and I attended a session about the Independent Living Center movement. At the end of that session, we looked at each other and agreed that West Tennessee needed one and Glen would lead the way. When we returned home, he began putting together an advisory group to look at the needs in West Tennessee and from there, the Jackson Center for Independent Living (JCIL) was born.

JCIL 'lived' at the STAR Center for its first five years, so our agencies worked side by side with the mission of helping our friends and neighbors with disabilities have access to the solutions they needed in order to learn effectively, to gain employment and to live independently. Glen led the way with his Board and staff in making JCIL a model of service that others could strive to replicate.

Over the last 20 years, Glen Barr became a dear friend and the words that best describe him in my mind are 'servant leader'. Glen's gentle smile filled with compassion when he sat listening and guiding someone with a disability or their family members. In his calm, caring way, he brought the gift of encouragement to so many of us. He led by example and his common sense approach to accessibility won over many public and private agency leaders.

Glen had a way of asking that made you want to say "yes", especially when it came to helping someone make their home accessible. He understood up front and personally what it meant to be able to get in and out of your home or how much freedom a scooter could mean. I

remember flying home from a California conference with Glen where he had bought his first scooter from someone who had a new one. His family was there to meet him and he immediately challenged his grandkids to a race in the Memphis airport. I am sure that Glen and his sweet wife, Mazie, ran a different pace through their lives from that day forward. That picture of Glen and his newly found freedom was imprinted in my mind forever, and it conveyed the real meaning of what the right assistive technology could mean in a person's life.

There are not many people who have the opportunity to touch so many lives like Glen did. I feel so privileged to have shared a small part of his life's journey. —Margaret Doumitt, executive director, STAR Center, Jackson

Glen Barr was a gentle man, but one who had a fiery side when that was needed. He recognized the importance of communication, getting the word out, in order to combat the isolation of people in rural parts of Tennessee who might have a disability. He developed a newsletter, Web site and radio show to connect people to resources and information. Every few months I could expect a call from Glen to talk about his current projects or a new idea. The Jackson Center for Independent Living was created and grew to be a great community and State resource under Glen's leadership. One thing in particular that I admired about Glen was the time he always made for people—finding individuals isolated in their community because of a disability, making them aware of possibilities in their life and connecting them to other people. More than 'information and referral', he was a source of support that one could count on to 'check back' after a phone call or initial meeting. A gentle man, and one who leaves behind a changed community and changed lives because of his presence.—Wanda Willis, executive director, Council on Developmental Disabilities



REMEMBERING JACKIE PAGE

Jackie was born during the depression in Asheville, North Carolina, but grew up in Brooklyn, New York. Her rare congenital condition, arthrogryposis, resulted in quadriplegia and she was educated at home through the New York City school system, which amounted to little more than 90 minutes, twice a week. Even "Sunday School" was home-based.

Jackie returned to Asheville to serve as executive director of Easter Seals. Always a pioneer, she was the first director with a significant disability. Later, she moved to Nashville with her parents. At church, she met her lifelong friend and mentor Elsa. Jackie and Elsa led a church-based group committed to promoting social friendships between persons with and without disabilities. That group's work resulted in the founding of Outlook Nashville in 1957. For 50 years, Outlook Nashville had a leading disability program in our community. In 2007, it merged with First Steps, Inc.

Jackie was rightfully proud of her three degrees from Peabody College: BA (1963), MA (1964), and EdS (1989) in human development counseling. She was the first Peabody College student who used a wheelchair to earn a degree, and recounted how, because of inaccessible classrooms, she would be carried upstairs to class.

Jackie was best known in Nashville for her nearly three decades as director of the Metro Nashville Disability Information Office. In that role, Jackie was an advocate on panels and at conferences, educating the public about the needs and rights of individuals with disabilities. She staffed the Mayor's Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities, and orchestrated its student poster contests and annual awards ceremony during Disability Awareness Month, several of which were held at the

Parthenon. She made sure that every attendee was feted with roses provided by the Nashville Rose Society.

Years later she returned to the Parthenon for a different reception. She was a finalist for the prestigious ATHENA Award, honoring outstanding women leaders for their career successes, service to the community and encouragement of women.

Jackie's community service is legendary. She helped to found a number of disability organizations in Nashville, including the Consortium for Disability Issues and the Tennessee Disability Coalition. Jackie achieved an important goal when she helped bring the national movement for Centers for Independent Living to Tennessee.

Jackie's leadership and influence contributed to the establishment and ongoing development of the Technology Access Center. She helped with planning for the opening and development of this Center beginning in 1987, was a Charter Board Member, the first Board President and Emeritus Board Member for the remainder of her life.

Jackie understood the importance of inclusion of persons with disabilities in faith communities. She helped move Nashville forward by including interfaith worship services that modeled inclusivity as part of the annual citywide Disability Awareness Month. As a member of Brookmeade Congregational Church, she was able to use her gifts for leadership and her joy in singing in a choir.

In a *Peabody Reflector* profile, Jackie said, "If [society has] the appropriate attitude, then [it] will have already done a lot of these things, and not need magpies like me saying, 'When are you going to put this in place?'"

Jackie Page learned early that acquiring an education, adapting to her environments, and finding creative solutions to daily life with her quadriplegia were the ways that she could succeed in life and be of service to others. She accomplished that and enhanced the lives of thousands of children and adults with disabilities and their family members over her five decades of professional public service. Through her friendships she enriched the lives of countless others. Anyone who knew Jackie is better off for the time they spent with her.

Jackie benefited greatly from assistive technology and chose wisely the solutions to meet her needs. There was the elongated pen held in her mouth to sign documents. A supply of straws was always on hand. The specialized bed gave access and pain relief and the high tech wheelchair provided independent mobility. The telephones modified for access, including a switch and voice activated one used to call from bed maintained her life line to assistants and friends.

Once we learned of efforts by engineering students at Vanderbilt University to develop a feeding machine for people with limited or no use of their arms and hands. Jackie's immediate response to this idea was that she would not at all be interested in using one. She stated, "I would miss the social interaction of having someone to assist me with eating. I would not want to be left to eat alone." In her whole life, she never once ate a meal alone. The assistive technology of interest to Jackie was that which allowed her to connect and interact with people, not any that would give her independence in isolation.

The most recognizable and talked about device Jackie used was a homemade mouth stick with a table fork on the end of it that had the prongs bent at a 90% angle. With this she completely controlled her power wheelchair for her safe locomotion. She turned the pages of thousands of personal and work-related documents and books, especially mysteries. The TV remote was controlled and elevator buttons were selected. She interfaced with her computer keyboard for work, personal use and recreation. When Jackie was in her wheelchair, one of those famous mouth sticks meticulously made to her specifications by a fellow church member for many years, was either at work held in her mouth or held at the ready lodged in her left hand and leaning against her.

Mentor was a role that Jackie accepted confidently, and she frequently reminded those who learned from this that she was indeed "their" mentor. She never failed to offer words of encouragement for anyone, especially those needing a pick me up. For all of us who benefited from her support and concern, Jackie is deeply missed. She was a mentor to me. She was a friend. She taught me the important significance of a butterfly's fleeting life of freedom.—*Bob Kibler, executive director, Technology Access Center* [Note: This piece was adapted from a Special Edition of *TechKnowledge* and used with permission.]

Jackie Page shared her thoughts about reaching her 77th birthday with *Breaking Ground* readers in April, 2009. Her recurrent theme was "I'm still here". For me, that refrain still pertains. Jackie is still here in the hearts and minds of all of us who worked with her and learned from her. She is still here in the many programs and events that she was instrumental in establishing.

Jackie is still here in the Annual Mayor's Advisory Committee Awards, which was instituted during her tenure as staff to the committee; she is still here in the Center for Independent Living of Middle Tennessee, which came to fruition with her help and guidance; she is still here in the Technology Access Center, which she helped develop and was a charter board member and the first board president; she is still here in the Tennessee Disability Coalition, which she helped bring into being; she is still here in the annual Davidson County School Art Contest for Disability Awareness Month.

For all these and more, Jackie is still here.—*Errol L. Elshtain, director of development, Council on Developmental Disabilities*

Jackie Page was a mentor to so many people. She taught me lots of things, but one of the most important was the need for a Center for Independent Living (CIL) in Nashville. Prior to 1992, Nashville did not have a CIL, possibly the only capitol city in the country without this program. Through Jackie's advocacy and tenacity, more people became aware of the critical need for this program. The Developmental Disabilities Council was convinced and worked with the State Vocational Rehabilitation office to launch the CIL of Middle Tennessee and place priority on locating rehabilitation services funding for it. I credit Jackie with the vision and real work behind the Center's establishment. We all appreciate her willingness to be a lifelong teacher and role model to many, demonstrating intelligence, charisma, style, grace and sheer humanness of a person that many people in our society still see as a person with a disability. It's hard to imagine a world without Jackie.—*Wanda Willis, executive director, Council on Developmental Disabilities*

PROJECT OPEN WIDE



BY ERROL ELSHTAIN

About four years ago, the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities learned that one of its members, a young man with an intellectual disability, had been having a toothache. For treatment, he was taken to the hospital, anesthetized and all his teeth were pulled. He was now a young man wearing dentures. Reflecting on his experience, our Council member said, "A regular dentist isn't really prepared for people with disabilities."

As Joyce Sievers, the Council chair, remembers it, "Over 15 years as a Family Support Coordinator for 12 counties in the Upper Cumberland, I became increasingly aware of the need for dental care for individuals with developmental disabilities. Advocacy for dental supports became a priority for me based on the obvious need for oral health care and the lack of understanding and support for it. The tipping point for the Council came at a Planning and Priorities Committee discussion, when the afore-mentioned young man told us the story of unknowingly having his teeth all pulled."

The Council set to work to find out what it could do to remedy this major gap in the health care of adults with disabilities in Tennessee. Researching the matter resulted in finding these needs.

- Dentists sensitive to persons with any kind of disability,
- Training dentists and hygienists to provide quality services to people with disabilities,
- Increased physically accessible dental service providers,
- Better access to dental services for people with all disabilities,
- Increased access to affordable preventative and restorative dental services, and
- Health insurance coverage for dental services.

In May, 2008, the Council convened an expert panel, led by Ms. Sievers, which presented recommendations toward reaching the Council's vision of preventative and restorative dental services for all Tennesseans with disabilities, regardless of age or geographic location. One of these recommendations was the development of a specialized dental clinic. By September of that year, the Council announced the availability of grant funds up to \$100,000 per year

for three years for a Dental Services Clinic demonstration project serving people with disabilities. In May, 2009, the Council approved the application from the Orange Grove Center, Inc. in Chattanooga for Project Open Wide. The Council's funds were matched with \$136,329 from the grantee.

The majority of the Council's funds were used to hire a dentist, Dr. Kristin Compton, and a certified dental assistant, Jeanette Hames. The project director, Dr. Rick Rader, successfully developed a commitment from the Chattanooga State Dental Hygiene program to have its students receive their introductory clinical experience at the Orange Grove clinic. By the end of June, 2010, nearly 500 people had been seen in the clinic.

But the project will go much further than this. Vigorous public health education is planned that will include local Arcs, People First of Tennessee, Direct Support Professionals of Tennessee, the Division of Intellectual Disabilities Services, the Tennessee Network of Community Options (TNCO), churches, health departments, exhibit displays and live presentations. Surveys and focus groups with area dentists will be employed to ascertain the local objections to providing dental care to people with disabilities and strategies to overcome this reluctance will be developed.

In preparation for the second year of Project Open Wide, the clinic received a cosmetic renovation, including full repainting, the installation of a new floor and wall decorations that are upbeat, dynamic and inviting. The clinic has started to identify and stock patients' movie and music preferences. Photos of the patients are displayed throughout the clinic. Capital upgrades, including digital X-rays, electronic patient records and other related equipment, were approved and ordered. All of this was achieved with funds other than the Council's grant.

This is a great beginning towards the Council's vision and addressing the needs identified by its research.

Errol Elshain is director of development for the Council on Developmental Disabilities

"THEY HAD ME AT HELLO"

Reflections on Providing Dental Care to Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

BY KRISTIN COMPTON, DMD

Growing up as a young girl in Kentucky, the most important

lesson I learned from my parents and grandparents was that our actions and energy only count if they benefit others.

As a dental student at the University of Louisville School of Dentistry I was fortunate enough to do a rotation at the Underwood and Lee Clinic (where I eventually received my post-graduate Fellowship training), a center that specializes in caring for patients with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Borrowing the memorable line from the movie *Jerry McGuire*, they "had me at hello".

Instantly, I was transported into a place that was worlds apart from the typical settings where dental students learned their clinical skills. It was at this point that I realized that there were many "differences" in working with this rewarding and challenging population.

The first difference I noticed was the reaction to my enthusiasm from my fellow classmates. They were confused at my excitement, questioning "why" I would want to get involved with "those people". In many ways, explaining "why" is like having to explain a joke; if you don't "get it", you "don't get it."

There are several layers that provide me with the ongoing challenge, excitement and satisfaction that come from treating these sometimes vulnerable individuals.

First is the spiritual connection I get from my work. Abraham Lincoln said, "When I do good, I feel good. When I do bad, I feel bad. That's my religion." The feeling of doing "good", doing "the right thing", serves as a connection to my religious beliefs. I am fortunate enough to have chosen both a profession and a niche that fortifies that daily.

The intellectual and clinical challenges are a bonus. The ongoing need to perfect my skills, my approach and my appreciation of the "big picture" is a huge professional bonus. Even the most mundane, elementary and commonplace procedures can tax the most



Photo by Dennis Wilkes

Meredith Dalton (left) with Dr. Kristin Compton

proficient clinician when your patient cannot express their fears, feelings and concerns. It behooves us to constantly rethink and revisit what we are doing and how we can do it better. The impact of our encounters with patients is far reaching and can have an effect on their success in other areas, including education, training, socialization and behavior. By earning trust "in the chair" we provide the security and confidence for them to trust other professionals in other settings and in other situations.

The opportunity for oral healthcare to be a valuable part in the lives of people is of particular appeal to me. Seeing new self-esteem, confidence and smiles never gets old. The need to gather other team members, including families, direct support professionals, teachers, vocational counselors, therapists and policy makers, is both an opportunity and a challenge. The added bonus of mentoring the next generation of dentists, dental hygiene students and dental assistants is a way of giving back and ensuring that the role of oral healthcare is continuously promoted and advanced.

Suffice it to say that when I am out with my dental colleagues on Sunday evening and the inevitable topic of going back to work comes up, it's easy to recognize me...I'm the one with the smile.

Kristin Compton is director of Dental Services at the Orange Grove Center in Chattanooga.



SPORTS 4 ALL

BY EMMA SHOUSE

The Sports 4 All Foundation (S4AF) is a nonprofit organization that fills an often unmet need in the community: providing individuals with disabilities opportunities to participate in sports and recreation through a holistic approach to physical, mental and social health. The organization was founded by Kris Salisbury, whose daughter, Erica, has Down syndrome and loves sports.

Ms. Salisbury noticed that athletes with disabilities often could not fully participate in sporting events because they did not have the necessary sports equipment. S4AF began from her search for ways to provide needed equipment to athletes with disabilities and has evolved into a more extensive and impressive program committed to promoting healthy lifestyles for people with disabilities. Sports 4 All also coordinates Project HEALTH (Helping Every American Learn to be Healthy), which is a program that provides opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities to be physically active for optimal physical and emotional health.

I had the privilege of participating in a Project HEALTH community class at the Coleman Community Center in Nashville this August. Project HEALTH includes classes taught at private day facility programs and community-based classes at various public facilities around Nashville. The class I participated in was primarily attended by youth between the ages of 10-18 and focused on fun and physically active games, with an emphasis on social interaction and getting to know the other participants. The leader of the group, Project HEALTH program facilitator Megan Graf, did an excellent job of keeping everyone upbeat and fully included, working well in a group of individuals with a variety of disabilities and levels of functioning. From the fitness portion of the class to the activity where the participants practiced how to make healthy snacks, everyone remained excited and eager to learn.

The specific class I attended was unique because it was fully inclusive with two different groups: a Friends of Metro Parks youth program that regularly attends classes and a church youth group from Illinois that was in Nashville for a mission trip. Project HEALTH invites people without disabilities to participate in classes as often as possible. They believe that inviting youth without disabilities to participate in fun, recreational activities alongside youth with disabilities will lead to better understanding and acceptance of people with disabilities, as well as promote positive peer interaction for everyone. As the sister of a sibling with autism, I certainly believe in the value of inclusion. Still, it was surprising and inspiring to witness how quickly the relationships developed between young people with and without disabilities simply through playing silly games and laughing together, and to watch the “typical” children make the journey from an attitude of uncertainty and confusion to an attitude of joy and excitement when interacting with their peers with disabilities.

Sports 4 All has a number of new projects in various stages of development for the coming months. Project HEALTH is expanding to Murfreesboro in the Fall, in collaboration with Middle Tennessee State University faculty and students and Murfreesboro Parks and Recreation. Also, in collaboration with The Arc of Tennessee, Project HEALTH will be providing educational courses about fitness and nutrition to parents, caregivers and direct support professionals of individuals with disabilities.

Waverly Harris-Christopher, program director of Project HEALTH, explained that while teaching individuals with disabilities who live with parents or caregivers good health habits, like exercise and how to prepare healthy meals, is certainly valuable, unless parents and caregivers are willing to commit to a healthy lifestyle as well, it is difficult to accomplish much sustainable change. Offering



opportunities for direct support professionals and caregivers to learn healthy habits will create a culture change that lasts beyond the classes.

Kris Salisbury and Waverly Harris-Christopher also were invited to join the Tennessee Obesity Task Force, which meets monthly to discuss health risks and to write new health policies regarding obesity and related issues. Ms. Salisbury and Ms. Harris-Christopher serve as advocates for the disability community and ensure that new policies do not overlook the needs of people with disabilities.

Another facet of Sports 4 All is its collaboration with the Tennessee Association for Blind Athletes and the Tennessee School for the Blind to facilitate exercise and nutrition classes. These three entities are in the process of organizing a collaboration among organizations, communities and grocery stores to make healthy shopping more accessible for people with visual impairments and people who need extra assistance in grocery stores.

These efforts and programs are only a few of the ways that this organization is working to improve the health for individuals with disabilities and, on a larger scale, the quality of life in the community.

If you would like to participate in one of the free community classes or your facility would like to partner with Sports 4 All

to provide private day facility classes, contact Waverly Harris-Christopher at 615-354-6454. If you would like to learn more about this organization or about the variety of ways you can donate resources or volunteer your time to the Sports 4 All Foundation, visit www.s4af.org or call 615-354-6454. Sports 4 All Foundation is located at 5827 Charlotte Pike in Nashville and is supported by the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities, the Baptist Healing Trust and the Predators Foundation.

Emma Shouse just completed a Public Policy internship with the Council on Developmental Disabilities and is a student at Belmont University.





PARTNERS 2010-11 CLASS BEGINS

BY NED ANDREW SOLOMON

September 24th & 25th marked the beginning of the 17th annual Partners in Policymaking Leadership Institute. Partners, a training program for adults with disabilities and family members of persons with disabilities, is based on a concept that began at the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities in 1987.

It is only fitting that the kick-off session on the History of the Disability Experience was conducted by Partners founder, Colleen Wieck, with help from Partners graduates Suzanne Colsey and Sandi Klink from Memphis.

In subsequent weekends, Partners will learn about:

- Best practices in inclusive education
- Services and supports in Tennessee
- Building more inclusive communities
- Independent living
- Self-determination, self-direction and person-centered practices
- Customized employment
- Assistive technology
- State and federal legislative processes
- Presenting testimony
- Conducting effective meetings

and much more.

They will also learn a great deal from networking with their Partners peers during their seven intensive sessions, and the Partners graduates who attend the annual Partners Reunion Conference in February.

The Council is pleased to announce the 2010-11 class.

JESSICA BEECHAM, Murfreesboro
LUZ BELLEZA-BINNS, Hermitage
NURHAN BOZKURT, Nashville
CYNTHIA BRANDON, Memphis
LINDA DEE BROWN, La Vergne
TERESA CAREY, Williamsport
STEPHANIE COOK, Knoxville
ANN CURL, Franklin
ROSEY DEPRIEST, Hohenwald
BARBARA EARLY, Lenoir City
RICHARD ELLIS, Maryville
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LESLIE HARTMAN, Nashville
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CYNTHIA SALEM, Memphis
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CYNTHIA YOUNG, Chattanooga

Ned Andrew Solomon is director of the Partners in Policymaking Leadership Institute.

BREAKING GROUND RESOURCES: MULTICULTURALISM

COMPILED BY COURTNEY TAYLOR

In his paper, "Multiculturalism, Identity, and Diversity", political writer Andrew Heywood argues it is a mistake to think of "multiculturalism" simply as cultural diversity. Instead, he writes, it must be viewed as an "approach to dealing with the challenges of cultural diversity and, in particular, to bringing about the advancement of marginalized or disadvantaged groups."

Taking Mr. Heywood's dynamic definition of multiculturalism into account, the resources below include international agencies that are working directly on issues dealing with race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation and disability.

Visit **TENNESSEE DISABILITY PATHFINDER'S** online database and Disability Resources Library, and the *Camino Seguro* database for additional resources in Tennessee.

www.familypathfinder.org

The **ASSOCIATION FOR MULTICULTURAL COUNSELING AND DEVELOPMENT** seeks to develop programs that improve ethnic and racial empathy and understanding. Its activities are designed to advance and sustain personal growth and improve educational opportunities for members from diverse cultural backgrounds. Provisions are made for in-service and pre-service training for members and for others in the profession. Efforts are made to strengthen members professionally and to enhance their ability to serve as behavioral change agents. The Association publishes the *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*.

www.amcdaca.org/amcd/default.cfm

The **CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES** works to support the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in social life and development; to advance the rights and protect the dignity of persons with disabilities; and to promote equal access to employment, education, information, goods and services. The organization prepares publications and acts as a clearinghouse for information on disability issues; promotes national, regional and international programs and activities; provides support to governments and civil society; and gives substantial support to technical cooperation projects and activities.

www.un.org/disabilities/

The **CULTURAL ORIENTATION RESOURCE CENTER** provides orientation resources for refugee newcomers and service providers throughout the United States and overseas. The Center's publication, *Culture Profiles*, provides short introductions to the cultural background of refugee populations. Each one contains a basic introduction to the people, history and culture of the group concerned and includes topics such as history, geography, economy, social structure, gender roles,

language and literacy, education, religion, art and song, food and dress, festivities, names, and features of the language.

www.cal.org/co/

DISABLED PEOPLES' INTERNATIONAL is a network of international organizations or assemblies of people with disabilities established to promote human rights through the promotion of full participation and equalization of opportunity and development.

<http://v1.dpi.org/lang-en/>

The **GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR CHILD AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT** has long provided leadership in cultural and linguistic competence and in addressing health and mental health disparities and inequities. Through a variety of programs and projects, the Center has provided the vision, leadership, knowledge, training and technical assistance to increase the capacity of systems and programs serving a broad array of individuals and families to design, implement and evaluate culturally and linguistically competent service delivery systems.

<http://gucchd.georgetown.edu/64269.html>

The **INTERNATIONAL DISABILITY ALLIANCE** promotes the effective and full implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) worldwide, as well as compliance with the CRPD within the United Nations system, through the active and coordinated involvement of representative organizations of persons with disabilities at national, regional and international levels.

www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/

The **MULTICULTURAL DISABILITY ADVOCACY ASSOCIATION (MDAA)** works to promote, protect and secure the rights and interests of people with disabilities and their families who are from non-English speaking backgrounds. Although the Association is located in Australia, their Web site offers a variety of helpful resources in the areas of ethnic diversity and disability.

<http://www.mdaa.org.au/>

The **OFFICE OF MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS (OMA)** is part of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association National Office. This office addresses cultural and linguistic diversity issues related to professionals and persons with communication disorders and differences. The Office's Web site has a number of resources, including sections on cultural competence and on research projects with a focus on multiculturalism.

www.asha.org/practice/multicultural/

Courtney Taylor is associate director of Communications and dissemination at the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center.

WANDA WILLIS

Named President of National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities



Photo by Ned Andrew Solomon

Wanda Willis, executive director of the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities, has been elected incoming president for the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD). Ms. Willis will serve a two-year term that began October 1, 2010. NACDD represents 55 State and Territorial Councils that promote the interests and rights of people with developmental disabilities and their families.

Ms. Willis has directed the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities for 20 years and has over 35 years experience in the disability field. The Tennessee Council has a 40-year history of initiating invaluable programs that have enriched the lives of citizens with developmental disabilities. It has played a key role in forging partnerships among government programs and non-disability organizations, like schools, employers, housing agencies and others, to create the best possible environments and supports that will allow citizens who have a developmental disability to lead productive and fulfilling lives in their community.

By providing assistance to local communities, businesses and government disability programs, the Council has been a leader in developing innovative programs that make the most of available resources, facilitate collaboration among public and private entities, and promote the kind of services that respect and maximize the abilities of individuals with developmental disabilities. It is responsible for hundreds of program advancements in Tennessee for citizens with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the areas of housing, employment, education, health care, transportation, recreation, leadership development and various community supports.

SHARON LEWIS

Named Commissioner of the Administration on Developmental Disabilities at the Administration for Children and Families

Photo from www.aucdd.org

Sharon Lewis joined the Department of Health and Human Services as Commissioner of the Administration on Developmental Disabilities at the Administration for Children and Families.

Ms. Lewis has extensive experience as a disability policy advocate. She has worked as the Senior Disability Policy Advisor to U.S. House Committee on Education & Labor Chairman George Miller since 2007. In that role, she advised Chairman Miller on legislative strategy and disability-related policy in education, employment and healthcare, and served as the lead staffer on the disability provisions of key pieces of legislation and on implementation oversight.

During President Barack Obama's transition, Ms. Lewis served as a member of the Department of Education Agency Review Team. Previously, she worked as a Kennedy Public Policy Fellow for U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Children & Families Chairman Chris Dodd. Prior to her work in Congress, Ms. Lewis served at the state level in various disability policy and program roles, and as a grassroots community organizer. Ms. Lewis received her BFA from Washington University in St. Louis.

NEW COUNCIL MEMBERS APPOINTED BY GOVERNOR

Three new appointments and two reappointments were made to the Council on Developmental Disabilities in July. In his general announcement, Governor Bredesen said, "I commend all those appointed for their willingness to serve the state through its boards and commissions. Tennesseans have always been recognized for

dedicating their time and talents to serve their fellow citizens, and I appreciate these men and women for upholding this tradition. I am confident they will represent their respective boards with integrity and honor."

Breaking Ground is pleased to introduce them to you.

Photos by Ned Andrew Solomon



CYNTHIA R. CHAMBERS, PhD, from Jonesborough, is an assistant professor in the Department of Human Development and Learning at East Tennessee State University (ETSU). Dr. Chambers will be representing the First Tennessee Development District on the Council.

Dr. Chambers received her doctorate in Early Childhood Special Education at the University of Kansas in 2007 and has extensive professional and personal experience with disability issues. She is active in the local, state and national disability arenas, and has family members who have disabilities. She serves as co-chair of the Research Committee for the Sibling Leadership Network and director of East Tennessee Siblings United (formerly Sibshops). Dr. Chambers is responsible for the Next Chapter Book Club project recently funded by the Council at ETSU. She is connected to many community educational programs through ETSU and will be an excellent liaison to the Upper East Tennessee region on disability issues.



RENEE M. LOPEZ, who lives in Gallatin, will be an At-Large representative on the Council. Ms. Lopez has an MS in Rehabilitation Counseling from the University of Memphis. She has 19 years of experience working with people with disabilities; 15 years experience hiring, training and supervising personal assistants, and has been a Community Work Incentives Coordinator with the Tennessee Disability Coalition since 2006.

Ms. Lopez brings unique experiences to the Council as a person born without a disability who acquired a disability as a young woman and had to rely on assistance to build new employment skills. She is currently a jobs counselor with a Social Security program that helps people with disabilities manage their benefits and become fully employed.

Ms. Lopez is very active in employment issues and is a member of the Tennessee Employment Consortium, the Disability Employment Partners Coalition and TRENDS (Training Resource Employment Network for Disability Services) Cookeville. She has exceptional leadership skills and is a positive and productive contributor to any initiative in which she participates.



SARABETH TURMAN of Waynesboro will represent the South Central Development District. Ms. Turman has an Associates degree from Columbia State Community College and has just enrolled at Freed Hardeman University to pursue a Bachelors degree in Special Education with an endorsement in School Counseling. She has been a teacher's aide/library aide at Waynesboro Middle School since 2005 and prior to that spent a year as a substitute teacher.

Reappointed to the Council were **DEBORAH S. RIFFLE** of Humboldt, representing the Northwest Tennessee Development District, and **MARILYN L. SORTOR** of Memphis, representing the Memphis Delta Development District.

TENNESSEE SPOTLIGHT

Partners 08-09 graduate **Jo Ver Mulm** contacted Transportation Director Dana Richardson in March to solicit the department's help and support in creating a class for our young people on how to access public transportation (the Rover) in Murfreesboro. The training was to be part of Ms. Ver Mulm's work with L.E.A.R.N. (Life Enrichment and Recreation Network), an initiative that provides life skills experiences to young adults with developmental disabilities.

The idea was very well received, and assistant transportation director, **Nellie Patton**, worked with L.E.A.R.N. to develop a presentation for the students, including printing special maps of the Rover routes and explaining bus schedules in a way that was easier to understand. She also brought a Rover bus and driver, after hours, to a L.E.A.R.N. class site at First Baptist Church in Murfreesboro so that the students could practice boarding, paying and transferring. With the information they learned, the students planned a Rover outing of their own, which was successfully completed.

The **Brain Injury Association of Tennessee** (BIAT) would like to welcome **Gina Stumph** as its newest employee. Ms. Stumph started working on July 19th as Administrative Assistant. She also will be involved with the **TBI Families Share Peer Mentoring Program**.

Ms. Stumph is very excited to be working at BIAT and the opportunity to help other brain injury survivors and their families. Her daughter, **Lindsey**, sustained a brain injury about 18 months ago. Lindsey is looking forward to volunteering for BIAT and her future goal is to speak to other high school students about her injury, journey and the importance of wearing seatbelts.

Partners 06-07 graduate **Sheri Anderson** received a scholarship from **The National Federation of the Blind** (NFB), the nation's oldest and largest organization of blind people. The NFB awards 30 scholarships each year to recognize achievement by blind scholars. Ms. Anderson was recognized for her work as an emergency management professional.



Photos by Patricia King

Jan Dugger, grandfather (left)



Allie King

Youth Leadership Forum 2009 graduate **Allie King** graduated from **Collierville High School** on May 15, 2010. She has been accepted at the **University of Memphis**.

In October 2009, the **Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities** announced the availability of grant funds for a **Next Chapter Book Club** (NCBC) demonstration project in Tennessee. The Next Chapter Book Club is an innovative project that provides adolescents and adults with disabilities an opportunity to read and socialize with friends. The NCBC model actively promotes literacy learning and social connectedness. The model provides many opportunities for self-advocacy as members decide which book they want to read, how they want to read the book, and how they want to structure or organize their weekly club meetings.

A group of five to ten people with disabilities, with a wide range of reading skills, gather with two trained volunteer facilitators in a local bookstore or café to read aloud and discuss a book for one hour a week. This provides the group the opportunity to read and learn to read, talk about books and make friends in a fun, community setting.

The Council is pleased to announce the four agencies selected to coordinate Next Chapter Book Clubs in their areas. They are the **Memphis Center for Independent Living**, the **Arc of Williamson County**, **East Tennessee Technology Access Center** and **East Tennessee State University**.

TENNESSEE SPOTLIGHT wants to hear great things about YOU!

- Have you or your family member been accepted into or successfully completed an educational program?
- Have you or your family member received a nomination or an award for your wonderful work in the community?
- Have you or your family member been hired for a new job or gotten a recent promotion?

Send your good news and pictures by e-mail to: **ned.solomon@tn.gov** and we'll make every attempt to get it in an upcoming issue of **Breaking Ground!**

Tennessee Disability Pathfinder announces the **6th Annual Disability Services and the Hispanic Community Conference** for Wednesday, November 17, 2010. The conference is sponsored by Tennessee Disability Pathfinder, the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities and the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities.

There will be three conference sessions.

- Disability Etiquette and People First Language, a presentation by Megan Hart, coordinator of Education and Training Services at Tennessee Disability Pathfinder;
- Disability Support Groups in Nashville, a panel discussion with Vanderbilt pediatrician Adriana Bialostozki, MD; life coach Sandra Velarde; Vanderbilt Kennedy Center Parent Stress Intervention Project coordinator Roxanne Carreon; Mental Health Association of Middle Tennessee Hispanic outreach coordinator Luisa Hough; and Tennessee Disability Pathfinder Spanish services coordinator Carolina Meyerson;
- Impact of Health Care Reform and Disability in Tennessee, a panel discussion with TennCare director of policy Susan Baird; Tennessee

Health Care Campaign executive director Tony Garr; Metro Health Department director of Health Access Fonda Harris; and Health Assist Tennessee education coordinator Michelle McRae.

The conference will be held at Fifty Forward, Knowles Senior Center in Nashville.

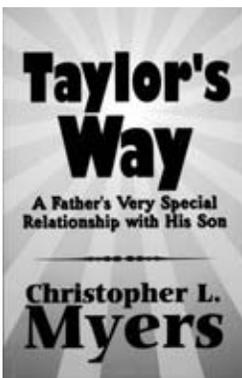
For more information, contact Carolina Meyerson at **615-400-4422** or eva.c.meyerson@vanderbilt.edu.

Visit Pathfinder's "**DISABILITY RESOURCES LIBRARY**" to find a wealth of information on both state and national resources, including advocacy and law, arts and recreation, assistive technology, education, health care, housing, Junior League Family Resource Center, mental health, religion and spirituality resources for congregations/faith communities, support for families, and Vanderbilt Kennedy Center Resources.

Visit Pathfinder's "**HISPANIC OUTREACH**" to access **CAMINO SEGURO**, a database of disability, mental health and social service agencies with bilingual Spanish-speaking staff across the State of Tennessee.

www.familypathfinder.org

TAYLOR'S WAY: A FATHER'S VERY SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS SON



REVIEWED BY TOMMY LEE KIDD

Since I am a father of a daughter with Down syndrome, author Christopher Myers touched me with his chronological, month-by-month journal of his son's life in the book, *Taylor's Way*. Taylor has advanced cerebral palsy, autism and an intellectual disability. Mr. Myers vividly and honestly documents the struggles of raising Taylor along with juggling his career, his marriage, his other children and his life in general.

While reading this book, I was able to relate the triumphs and tribulations of Mr. Myers raising Taylor with my own situation in raising my daughter.

To understand who Taylor is, Mr. Myers begins by introducing Taylor's family, the root of his son's support system. Throughout the book, Mr. Myers writes extensively about the support they get from family, friends, support organizations and Taylor's school teachers. Mr. Myers also points out the faith that they place in God to see them through their challenges.

From the beginning of the book, Taylor struggles with basic life functions as Mr. Myers and his wife, Susie, watch their other children

progress as typical children. As Mr. Myers states in the book, "Everything is a concern with a special needs child." Early on, Mr. Myers struggles with the question, "Is this God's plan or God's punishment?" The book goes on to chronicle issues with Taylor's ability to use the bathroom, illnesses, falls, hospital stays, doctor visits, behavioral problems, communication problems, weight and diet, etc.

The author finally reaches the point where he realizes that this is not God's punishment, but a reason for him to adapt his own way of life, and to get involved in organizations that help people with disabilities. At the end of the book he states, "Don't think of yourself as a special needs Mom or Dad, but rather as a parent who happens to have a special needs child."

I would recommend this book, especially to parents who have a child with a disability. Most parents of children with disabilities have experienced many (or all) of the same trials and emotions that Mr. Myers so candidly relates here. As I read the book, I laughed with him, cried with him, got mad with him, got confused with him, and rejoiced with him. I'll bet that you will too!

Tommy Lee Kidd is a member of the Council on Developmental Disabilities from Lawrenceburg.

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