

Center for Disabilities Studies

Highlights of the Year



The Early Learning Center

• **Early Learning Center**

In August of 2002, the University of Delaware purchased the former Girls, Inc. building on Wyoming Road to house the Early Learning Center (ELC). The ELC houses an integrated child care center offering child care as well as educational services to faculty and students at the University. The children enrolled in the ELC will be from a wide variety of backgrounds, and at least 20% of the children served will be children with disabilities. The ELC also provides pre-service training for undergraduate and graduate students in many disciplines, research on children and families, and training and technical assistance to other programs throughout the region. The center officially opened in June of 2004.

• **Disabilities Specialists**

The Family Support Initiative created an innovative training program for community agencies in the city of Wilmington. In order to address the needs of adults and children with disabilities in the community, members of community agencies participated in the Disability Specialist Fellowship Training. The purpose of the training is to transfer knowledge and resources to those who have had few opportunities to attain leadership positions in the

community. In addition to providing new learning opportunities for all staff at the community centers, key community members in participating communities will be training as Disability Specialists who will receive ongoing, up-to-date information and technical assistance.

• **Community Connectors**

Community Connectors are graduate and undergraduate students who serve as mentors, partners, and liaisons with adults with disabilities. Community Connectors seek out and support people with disabilities who wish to explore their options and become more active citizens in their communities. Whether through volunteer service, art, music, theater, recreation, or other interests, participants will have opportunities to get involved in the community.



Community Arts and Theatre Project participants

• **Early Steps to Literacy (State Improvement Grant)**

Early Steps to Literacy is an early literacy training project supported by the Delaware Department of Education State Improvement Grant (SIG). A series of six training modules were developed and implemented to provide professional development opportunities for preschool educators, family child care

providers, and early education staff throughout the state of Delaware. The goal of the SIG is to divert children at risk due to socioeconomic status from being referred to special education services for delays in speech and language as well as delayed literacy skills.

• **Dr. Donald Peters Symposium**

A symposium honoring Dr. Donald L. Peters, Amy Rextrew Professor Emeritus of Individual and Family Studies, was held on Friday, April 23, 2004. Dr. Peters retired from the University of Delaware in June 2003 after 18 years as a professor and administrator. He served as both Chair of the Department of Individual and Family Studies and founder and Director of the Center for Disabilities Studies. His 35 years of scholarship, teaching and service have touched thousands of students and professionals at the University of Delaware, Pennsylvania State University, and throughout the country and world.

• **Respite Care Report**

The Respite Care task force of the Family Support Initiative spent one year examining how respite care is publicly and privately provided in the state, lifespan respite programs in other states, and national legislation reintroduced in 2003 focused on lifespan respite. The task force of parents, caregivers, and professionals in the field drafted recommendations on how to improve lifespan respite care in Delaware.

Project Updates



CDS Graduate Students with Michael Gamel-McCormick, CDS Director

Preservice Training

• The interdisciplinary minor in Disabilities Studies

The minor provides an opportunity for students from a variety of disciplines to gain a substantive introduction to and understanding of the biological, social, and psychological origins and ramifications of disabilities. The program is designed to increase interdisciplinary understanding of disability and provide students, through the senior seminar, with an experience integrating their major with disability issues. Ninety students had completed the minor at the end of June 2004.

Community Training & Technical Assistance

• Community Education

Community Education continued offering training, technical assistance, and outreach to Delaware's disabilities services providers and community organizations. The Positive Behavior Intervention (PBI) Certificate Program was introduced this year because of increasing numbers of Delaware children who require intensive, systematic, and sustained supports in order to remain in the community. The certificate program provides mental health professionals with specialized skills to effectively serve children

with challenging behaviors in the community. Program faculty present evidence-based techniques that support adaptive, socially appropriate behavior while reducing the occurrences of inappropriate, destructive behavior.

Research & Evaluation

• The Interagency Resource Management Committee Evaluation Project

Through financial support from the Delaware Departments of Education, Health and Social Services, and Services to Children, Youth and their Families, the Center has analyzed the observational data collected from early care and education groups of children and interviews with the teachers of these children. The report, Delaware Early Care and Education Baseline Quality Study, provides information on the educational level and experiences of the current early care and education workforce and the quality of the experiences for children in the early care and education system in Delaware.

Service in the Community

• New Directions Early Head Start (NDEHS)

During the 2003-2004 year, NDEHS served 224 children and 21 pregnant women. Some highlights of the year include partnerships with Neighborhood House Inc. and the Early Learning Center. In March 2004, a grant to enhance services provided to pregnant women and newborns was awarded by the

March of Dimes. NDEHS also developed a relationship with A.I. duPont Hospital for Children to provide consultation around emotional wellness for infants and toddlers.

• Positive Behavior Support (PBS)

Project faculty, Dr. George Bear and Dr. Kathy Minke, revised the School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET) used to evaluate Delaware PBS Schools in the 2003-2004 school year. Most of the original items remain, and a new section was developed to assess social and emotional competencies, as well as some additional evaluation items added under the original sections. The additions focus on increasing family and school collaboration and developing social and emotional competencies. PBS and the FACT project co-sponsored a PBS and Systems of Care conference and jointly attended training in wrap around planning conducted by Dr. Lucille Eber.



Community Education Graduation

• Inclusive Schools Initiative (ISI)

ISI partnered with the National Institute on Urban School Improvement to expand our training and technical assistance in inclusive practices. Five pilot schools from across the state begin training in inclusive practices.

• Transition Partnership Project

During the 2003-04 year, the Transition Partnership Project (TPP) welcomed eight new students and a third teacher to its community-based education program for young adults with significant cognitive disabilities. Thirteen students graduated to employment or adult day programs. In total, TPP provided 21 students of the Red Clay Consolidated School District with opportunities for employment, recreation, personal management, and functional academics on campus and in the surrounding community.



Jamie McCready

Dissemination

CDS participated in a wide range of events to disseminate information on our research, evaluation, and service projects to the community including:

- The Disabilities Awareness Day Picnic
- LIFE Conference
- The Legislative Forum
- The Inclusion Conference

We also tailored presentations, training sessions, and reports to a wide range of community partners as requested.

Our specific dissemination products include:

- **delAware** Two issues of *delAware* were published in 2003-2004 that focused on the topics of advocacy and mental health.
- **delAware: A Research Brief**
- **Website** The CDS website is regularly updated to include news, events, reports, and publications.

Publications

Denson, C., Tressell, P, and Casey, K. (2004) ADA Eligibility process control model for DART First State Paratransit.

Eisenman, L. & Permenter, K. (2003) *Transition Partnership Project Evaluation: Families' Experiences and Expectations.*

Mann, T. (Ed.) (Summer 2003) *delAware.*

Mann, T. (Ed.) (Winter 2004) *delAware.*

McCormick-Gamel, M., Qui, W., & Baker, M. (2003) *Interviews of Consumers and Counselors; Project CLIMB Evaluation.*

Respite Care Task Force (2003) *Respite Care in Delaware: A Critical Need for Change.*

Salt, J., Cooksy, L., & Parker K. (2004) *Families & Communities Together An Evaluation of Delaware's Child Mental Health Grant Initiative: Interim Data Report.*

Visit www.udel.edu/cds for copies of reports and information on all of our dissemination activities.

Financials

The Center for Disabilities Studies had an operating budget of \$6,212,257 from July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2004. Of this total, \$3,088,384 was obtained through grants from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Administration for Children and Families, Head Start Bureau and Administration on Developmental Disabilities.

The Center also received matching support worth over one million dollars from the University of Delaware in the form of graduate research assistantships and tuition waivers and support of a wide range of projects and activities.

Our funding sources:

Federal Government	51%
University of Delaware	22%
Delaware Department of Education	15%
State of Delaware	10%
Delaware Disabilities Planning Council	<1%
Reading is Fundamental	<1%
Wilmington Council	<1%
Red Clay Consolidated School District	<1%
Individual gifts	<1%

Staff & Students

Core Staff

Michael Gamel-McCormick, Director
Sandi Bradford, Records Specialist
Carol Denson, Pre-Service Coordinator
Debbie Koch, Assistant to the Director
Tracy Mann, Dissemination Coordinator
Mary Thomas, Staff Assistant

Project Staff

Community Education

Tracy Bailey
Debbie Bain
Mark Bernstein
Judy Greene
Cory Nourie
Michael Partie
C. Renee Settles-Bean
Beverly Stapleford
Karen Townsend

Delaware Alternate Portfolio Assessment

Alison Chandler
Shaunna Crossen
Diana Farrell
Judi MacBride
Donald Peters

Early Learning Center

Karen Rucker, Director
Sherry Boleslawski
M. Rebecca Brown
Barbara Clayton
Ann Criel
Susan Dagdigian
Vickie Fischer
Nicole Johnson
Patrick Jones
Christine Noll
Jaquaya Thomas
Betty Gail Timm
Susan Yetman

Early Steps to Literacy (State Improvement Grant)

Janet McGehean

FACT

Jim Salt

Family Support

Tim Brooks
Teresita Cuevas
Vanessa Harper
Pat Tressell
Donald Unger



Center for Disabilities Studies Staff

Interagency Resource Management Committee

Debbie Amsden
Denise Hartranft

Positive Behavior Support

Debby Boyer
Sarah Hearn

New Directions Early Head Start

Jennifer Adams
Heidi Beck
Keith Boger
Martha Buell
Karen Catrow
F. Renee El-Williams
Michele Francia
Carolyn Graves
Norma Grice
Robin Harbaugh
Amy Harter
Esther Lauser
Danielle Mekulski
Allison Miller
Julisa Quixchan
Whitney Rutherford
Sarah Schuman
Holly Yoder

Transition Partnership Project

Laura Eisenman
Jackie Gallagher
Diane Merrill

Graduate Students

Vanessa Addeo, Meighan Baker, Nick Butt, Brigid Carbo, Samantha Cleaver, Teresa Dunham, Dana Jenson, Emily Klein, David Klein, Julie Koivunen, Meghann Krieger, Michael Matthews, Roseann McManus, Amy Sawyer, Annie Tanverdi, Christine Thompson, Laura Thompson, Nancy Trinh, Lisa Trischitta, Kimberly Trohaugh, Cara Trout, Deanna Tyree, Erin Walker, Kimberly Walker

Undergraduate Students

Jennifer Cali, Kristin Chickadel, Molly Dunson, Dina Femia, Kristen Figaro, Kelly Gilbert, Melissa House, Emma Llanso, Lisa Mandarechia, Jennifer Murray, Marisa Nomi, Alison Pace, Amanda Romano, Janine Scherr, Ashley Testa, Allison Wojcik, Caitlyn Young, Alison Zeigler

Community & University Partners

Our community and university partners provide invaluable support in meeting our mission. The Core Advisory Council offers policy input and direction to the Center for Disabilities Studies. Members include people with disabilities, families, and representatives from state agencies, service providers, and advocacy organizations.

Center for Disabilities Studies Core Advisory Council

- Marie-Anne Aghazadian, Parent Information Center
- Steven Amick, Delaware State Senate
- Martha Brooks, Delaware Department of Education
- Russ Dynes, Department of Public Health
- Micki Edelson, Homes For Life Foundation
- Deborah Farris, University of Delaware, ADA office
- Tony Glenn, DFRC, Inc.
- Ann Grunert, Special Olympics Delaware
- Andrea Guest, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Brian Hartman, Delaware Disabilities Law Program
- Linda Heller, Division of Services for Aging & Adults with Physical Disabilities
- Harry Hill, Division for the Visually Impaired
- Peggy Hirsh, Family Member
- Kyle Hodges, State Council for Persons with Disabilities
- Ray Hunt, Independent Resources, Inc,
- Jack Jadach, John G. Leach School, Colonial School District
- Yolanda Jenkins, Division of Child Mental Health Services
- Brenda Kramer, Family Member
- Rita Landgraf, State Council for Persons with Disabilities
- Bill Love, The Arc of Delaware (formerly)
- Raetta McCall, Advocate
- Pat Maichle, Developmental Disabilities Council
- Terry Olson, Mosaic, Inc.
- Alfred Onuonga, HIV/AIDS Services, Delaware Center for Justice
- Paul Poplawski, Division of Substance Abuse & Mental Health
- Susan Robinson, Division of Substance Abuse & Mental Health
- Marianne Smith, Division of Developmental Disabilities Services
- Phil Soule, Division of Social Services
- Robert Valihura, State Representative

University Partners

- Center for Community Research and Service
- College of Human Services, Education, and Public Policy
- Cooperative Extension
- Department of Consumer Studies
- Department of Individual and Family Studies
- Department of Psychology
- Department of Sociology
- Education Research and Development Center
- School of Education

Community Partners

- The Arc of Delaware
- The Autism Society of Delaware
- Christina School District
- Community Legal Aid Society
- Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative
- Delaware Department of Education
- Delaware Department of Health and Social Services
- Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth, & Their Families
- Delaware Developmental Disabilities Council
- DRFC, Inc.
- Freedom Center for Independent Living
- Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens
- Independent Resources, Inc.
- Red Clay Consolidated School District
- State Council for Persons with Disabilities
- & numerous local school districts, agencies, and organizations.

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Annual Report

July 1, 2003 through June 30, 2004

Letter from the Director

Dear Friends of the Center for Disabilities Studies,

As I think of the accomplishments of the past year, I am reminded of a classic concept from research. When constructing research studies, one always reviews the work that has come before and uses the ideas presented in previous research. Scientists refer to this as standing on the shoulders of giants, referring to those whose work has influenced current research. In physics, we think of Newton and Einstein; in psychology, Erikson and Piaget. A catch phrase even goes along with this concept, "I can see far because I stand on the shoulders of giants."

At the Center for Disabilities Studies, there are many giants who have helped us. Foremost among them are the people with disabilities and their families who truly allow us to see farther, to understand at a deeper level, and to work more effectively. Those parents and consumers who co-instruct courses, individuals who lead councils, and those who advocate for improvements in services are giants in our communities.

The Center staff and faculty are also giants, who conduct the research, program evaluation, and model services. They are dedicated to working with individuals and families to improve quality of life, services, and supports. They work tirelessly and with great passion.

Without the collaborative efforts of people with disabilities, their families, and the Center staff, we could not have accomplished what you will read about in this report. And after further thought, "giants" is not the right word to describe these individuals-"heroes" is more appropriate. All who participate in our work daily display the quiet, persistent, dedicated behavior necessary to improve the quality of life for all.

As you review the accomplishments of the past year, please remember that what you read about could not have taken place without these heroes.

Sincerely,



Center for Disabilities Studies University of Delaware

College of Human Services,
Education & Public Policy
166 Graham Hall
Newark, DE 19716
(302) 831-6974 voice
(302) 831-4689 TDD
www.udel.edu/cds
ud-cds@udel.edu

