



## **CDS staff member is awarded CDC fellowship**



Tracy Mann of UD's Center for Disabilities Studies will spend a year at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta.

9:10 a.m., June 18, 2008--Tracy Mann, communications manager in UD's Center for Disabilities Studies, has been awarded a year-long fellowship that will take her to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, where she will conduct field work and research in the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities (NCBDDD).

The fellowship, sponsored by the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD), will provide Mann with a stipend that covers her relocation and living expenses and will enable her to work closely with epidemiologists, public health educators and policy makers involved in the NCBDDD's Learn the Signs, Act Early campaign.

Working independently, Mann also will spearhead community outreach efforts and collect data that she will share with NCBDDD colleagues at periodic meetings.

"The Learn the Signs, Act Early campaign is intended to help families and doctors and educators decide if a child is having a developmental delay, and a lot of the work centers on autism," Mann said. "But the fellowship really will focus on the Act Early piece of the campaign, because one of the problems families typically encounter is the inability to get the right services."

Too often, Mann explained, all that's offered to families in need is a test when what's really needed are a range of appropriate services and solutions. It's her goal that her community outreach efforts will address this communication gap.

"When I first thought of applying for the fellowship, I thought it was just for post-doctoral candidates," said Mann, who is working on her doctoral dissertation in urban affairs and public policy at UD, where she also earned her master's degree. "As I read on, however, I thought more and more what a great opportunity the fellowship would be, because the work I'd be doing would involve both public policy and health communications efforts."

Mann, whose initial field of training was in communication, in which she earned a bachelor's degree from La Salle University, decided to "throw her hat into the ring" and in January she assembled the materials necessary for the application--three letters of

recommendation, college transcripts, a curriculum vitae and an essay on why she'd be a good fit for the fellowship. She was called for both a phone interview and an on-site interview in April and learned she'd been selected for the position in early May.

On July 1, she will officially begin the fellowship, and in a year she plans to return to her position at UD with much of value to share.

“This works so well with how we've grown as a center here, because we do have a greater emphasis on health and health promotion now,” said Mann, who has been in her position at UD's Center for Disabilities Studies for the past five years. “Having the opportunity to learn in the CDC's prevention and research branch among professionals trained in public health education will definitely be useful when I return to UD, because I'll have a different lens that I can bring to how we serve and interact with the community.”

Article by Becca Hutchinson

Photo by Kathy Atkinson