

breaking ground

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Featuring:

**Agencies Make Great Strides Toward Providing
Community Engagement for the People They Serve**



Council on
Developmental Disabilities

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Cover photos: On left, Debbie working at Dairy Queen; on right, Tammy Denniston at Southern Reins Center for Equine Therapy pictured with her friend Nick Vargas. Photo from the archives of the Southern Reins Center.



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Moving Toward Full Community Inclusion: *a philosophical and cultural transformation*

by Tyler Hampton, Executive Director and Troy Allen,
Director of Employment Services

Over the past five years SRVS has been going through a philosophical and cultural transformation, from a traditional provider agency of services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, to a model of community-based, integrated services where people are valued members of their communities. It has been a one-on-one, one-person-at-a-time transformation that will likely take many more years to be fully realized. SRVS is focused on innovative best practices and the statewide transition from segregated services and settings to full community inclusion.

Our greatest success stories focus on the changes in people's lives as they have become part of their communities. SRVS closed its workshop on June 30, 2015 and nearly half of the people from the shop are now working in integrated employment.



WREG-TV news personalities Marybeth Conley and Alex Coleman with Ariel Stanton of SRVS.

Photo by Deb Nichols.

As part of our move towards managed care with Employment and Community First (ECF) CHOICES benefits from TennCare, SRVS used grant funding to retain a consultant group to evaluate our readiness to provide these new community-based services.

The consultants recommended aligning our agency values and culture with the philosophy of the new services and measuring quality and outcomes in a person-centered manner. As a traditional agency, we have been more focused on compliance and tracking time spent with people. Our new focus will be on measuring outcomes and using performance data to improve our services.

Highlighting the successes

Another challenge has been getting family members on board with new initiatives.

Some family members have been reluctant or unwilling to allow their family member to pursue community employment or inclusion.

We understand those fears. Families have grown up in various environments and have met different challenges while raising a child with a disability.

Some families have the same expectations of their child with a disability that they have for their other children. Others are more protective and reluctant to trust the community to be accepting of their loved ones. The challenge was convincing the latter group to relax their fears about allowing loved ones to access the community and trust that SRVS would be there to guide them through the changes. Some families positioned themselves in stern opposition to these changes. The strategic approach SRVS used specifically addressed and alleviated those fears, while simultaneously developing and presenting a new service

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The "AutoZoners"

One of our most notable anecdotes involves two gentlemen who were the first people to choose to leave the shop and pursue community employment. Both gentlemen went to work in the AutoZone Fulfillment Center in Memphis, filling internet orders. They have absolutely excelled in their new positions.

The men have been praised by AutoZone management, featured in Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities videos, appeared in various state and local publications and received awards from the Governor. They are still employed and doing outstanding work. Because of this experience, AutoZone has hired eight more people we serve (10 total). AutoZone does not see these men and women as disabled; they have proudly proclaimed them to be "AutoZoners".

Changing a mindset

As an agency, one of the biggest challenges to transformation has been the mindset in our system of service, the culture that says we are a "Social Service". It is this mindset that keeps us from really moving the needle on employment of people with disabilities and supporting them to navigate community settings.

Lee Northcross listens to a docent at The Morton Museum of Collierville History. Lee attends the SRVS Collierville Enhanced Learning Center. She was on a community outing to the museum. Photo by Courtney Howard.



Continued from page 3

model. This new model exclusively included community-based supports and services and continually highlighted the successes people experienced while in the community.

Enhancing our communities, and our humanity

Overall, we believe that enhancing community and employment options for the people who receive our services is very important and beneficial for both the person with a disability and the community. In the past, people with disabilities were institutionalized and associated primarily with staff and with family members or friends with disabilities. When the institutions began to close the problem still remained. People are still “cocooned” in layers of service staff and family. Today we know that people who are valued members of their community have a higher sense of self-esteem and greater self-confidence. It has also been shown that people use fewer social services and entitlements like Medicaid because they are happier and healthier.

We believe the inclusion of people with disabilities makes our communities more diverse and completes our humanity. The world is made up of so many different beliefs, cultures, preferences and abilities, and missing out on any one of these reduces who we are as humans. All people have the same inherent rights, which include the option to work, live and thrive in their community. These rights can only be realized through direct exposure and involvement in the richness and opportunities for engagement communities have to offer.

Spreading the good word

Since SRVS began our shift from traditional services to services focused on community inclusion, we have hosted agencies from around the state and country that heard about our transformational efforts and wanted to know specifics. All have expressed the value of these sessions, taken SRVS strategies back to their home cities and states, and plan to replicate specific aspects of our approach.



While in the community Christmas shopping, Michael Scott received a hug from WWE (World Wrestling Entertainment) professional wrestler Jerry “The King” Lawler. Photo from SRVS Archives



Tammy Denniston at Southern Reins Center for Equine Therapy pictured with her friend Nick Vargas. The center is a new community outing for individuals where they are able to receive equine therapy. Photo credit: From the archives of the Southern Reins Center for Equine Therapy. Photo by Courtney Mickens.

This year, SRVS became a subject matter expert (SME) on transforming workshops into community employment in Tennessee. We are working with Gail Fanjoy from Maine. Gail is the national SME for the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) and SRVS is working as a local SME. This initiative was proposed because SRVS has a good understanding of both Tennessee Medicaid Rules and rates and we also know some of the barriers people are facing trying to change the systems.

It is a role we accepted humbly. While knowing we did something unique at the time, we also recognize that there are many good providers in Tennessee who are already firmly committed to community inclusion. Many others are trying to figure out how to close a workshop after embracing that model for decades.

Aligning missions

As an SME for ODEP, the short-term goal is to work with peer agencies and encourage them to look at their systems, culture and philosophies to understand how and if these components support community inclusion. If these factors do not support inclusion, there needs to be a shift in thinking to align the mission of the organization, organizational philosophies and internal policies and processes. They should all point toward more inclusive and supportive environments to support people in making and maintaining real relationships in the community.

In the long run, SRVS hopes to be a part of an overall change in how people live and are perceived by their communities. We want to be a catalyst for empowering people and for organizational transformation in Tennessee. We truly believe the most meaningful life is one where we are valued for our contributions and missed when we are gone.

A Provider Agency and Community Rise Up to Meet the Challenge

by **Ned Andrew Solomon,**
Editor-in-Chief, **Breaking Ground**

After 28 years, the doors of the Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) at Orange Grove Center were closing. Better known to this Chattanooga community as the Orange Grove Recycling Center, the move was seen by many as more of a tragedy than the next logical progression in the direction of providing the people served there with more inclusive community options. "We've had hundreds of people who have acquired training, skills and paid work, and been successful in community employment as a result of that endeavor," said Kyle Hauth, Orange Grove Center's executive director. "For many individuals, the recycling center was their next step toward their ultimate goal of a job in the community."

The decision to close the MRF was based on a new set of rules developed by the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) in 2014. Often referred to as the "HCBS (home- and community-based services) settings rule", it required that all of the settings in which Medicaid-reimbursed HCBS are provided, including residential and day services, are integrated in and supportive of full access to the greater community. It proposed that people receiving HCBS should be provided opportunities to seek employment, work in integrated settings and earn competitive wages. It also expected people receiving HCBS to spend time with others who don't have disabilities, and participate in community activities, like shopping, banking, dining, transportation, sports, recreation and church, in the same way that people who don't have disabilities do.

"Orange Grove has been watching the 'settings rule' closely, knowing that how



Debbie is a Dining Room attendant and is a perfect example of Community-Based Day services being used to assist a person in acquiring the competencies necessary to be successful in competitive employment. Debbie volunteered for years at a rehabilitation program and acquired many of the skills needed to work competitively. She successfully employs those skills daily at Dairy Queen.

it was applied and interpreted was up to our State – which would then really help us see how the landscape was going to change," said Hauth. "We concluded that the Recycling Center, for all its proven benefits and successes, would just not satisfy the new rule."

A public awareness nightmare

Successfully communicating the closing of this popular landmark created some unforeseen consequences. Orange Grove had an ongoing recycling contract with the city of Chattanooga that had to be dealt with, and presentations had to be made to the Mayor and the City Council. During this process, local media sources picked up and ran with the story.

"Before we knew it we had every media source in town coming to our front doors, literally standing outside, shaking the doors saying, 'Orange Grove is closing,'" recalled Hauth. "It was really a public awareness nightmare for us, because that was certainly not the message we needed to have out and about in our community. And that was certainly not the message we had conveyed to those media sources."

The community wanted to know why Orange Grove couldn't just keep the recycling center open as a service, and simply bring in more people without disabilities. "We had to understand what was expected in terms of an 'integrated environment,'" explained Hauth. "Where we wound up with that discussion was that it has to mirror our community. When we thought about the prospect of having 80% of the people that we employed without disabilities so that we could serve 20% of the people with disabilities, it just didn't really fit our overall mission, which is to try to assist those people with developmental disabilities in finding successful employment. Once we knew that, we realized we didn't have a choice but to close it."

A community steps up

Fortunately, after a rough start, the story gets better. "When we met with the City, we thought they'd say, 'well it's been a good 28 years that we've run together, and we'll go our separate ways. Good luck to you with your new venture!'" said Hauth. "But instead what they said is, 'we understand what you're talking about; it makes sense.' And to our astonishment, our City and our Mayor and his staff said, 'We want to help you with this effort.'"

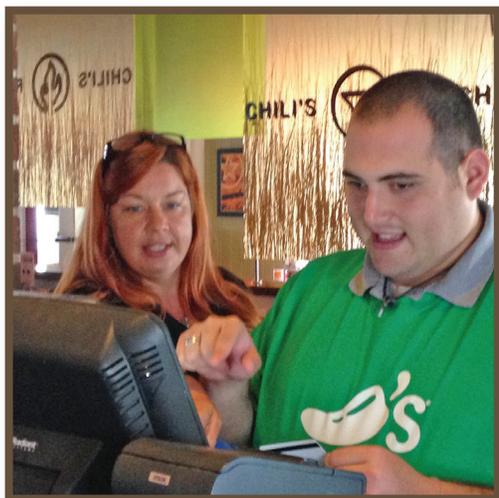
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The conversation became about jobs that people could do that would allow them to be directly engaged with the city. It was about the advancement of internships within the city, and more job creation, not only for the people who had been working for the recycling center, but all the other people who had been receiving Orange Grove's other facility-based services.

At the time of the closing, there were 60 people working at the recycling center. Forty-one of them were supported by Medicaid waivers through the Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD); 19 did not have disabilities, and were hired at the Center through other circumstances. "Within three months we moved all of those 41 people into either full-time work at minimum wage or higher, or some type of volunteer work in our community," said Hauth. "Thanks to partnerships in the community, and more employers that stepped up and said, 'yes, we want to be a part of this effort,' we saw people that have been working at subminimum wage for many years at the recycling center go directly to work for an employer at minimum wage or higher. Just to be able to see that made it all worthwhile."

A different approach was taken for the other facility-based options on the Orange Grove campus. Instead of setting a date when each one would be closed, staff started reassessing one individual at a time, and with a person-centered approach, researched what each person could do, and would be happy doing, in the community. "We've really just taken our person-centered planning to the next level in terms of setting stretch goals and increasing the supports for the individuals to help them achieve their goals," said Tera Roberts, Orange Grove's Director of Adult Services. "The outcome of that has not only benefitted the individuals we serve, but reduced the need and utilization of the facility-based programs."



Phillip has proven himself a valuable asset to this restaurant chain as he maintains all the silverware and buses tables. He loves his job and they love him.

No more subminimum wage

The recycling center was closed in July 2016. By November, Orange Grove had made the decision to eliminate the agency's "14C Certification" with the Department of Labor ("14C certification" refers to the section of the federal Fair Labor Standards Act that permits employers with 14c certificates to pay certain employees who have disabilities below minimum wage). That officially ended any and all subminimum wage training opportunities through Orange Grove. Again, some folks met that decision with resistance, afraid that it would essentially shut down options for their loved ones with intellectual disabilities. "But what we had been saying consistently is, if the people we're engaging in this kind of work can find successful employment or can utilize volunteerism to gain a much more real-life experience in understanding work, then it is a tremendous success," Hauth said.

"Our greatest successes have come from watching individuals we support get their first ever competitive job in the community, or their first ever volunteer job in the community," added Roberts.

Of course, Orange Grove serves hundreds of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and they are not all past participants in the recycling program. The agency is actively working on transitioning all the people they serve to more meaningful engagement with the community. "Even though I could never discredit what we have done for the last 63 years, we realized that we had been, inadvertently, kind of grouping people together in our facility-based programs," said Roberts. "As we have looked at the individuals we serve with the 'settings rule' lens, and stepped up our person-centered approach to getting them out into their own communities more and more, we've really seen that they're realizing significant benefit personally."

Fear of the unknown

Preparing the community-at-large for this transition was one thing; preparing Orange Grove staff, the people they serve and those people's families was another thing altogether. "One of our biggest challenges has been the fear of change and the unknown that our staff has experienced," said Roberts. "It's also been a challenge to get all of our staff trained on additional person-centered thinking tools and techniques, and to put them into active practice in the community."

Staff also had to shift gears from acting like a caregiver, to being more like a life and job coach. However, the biggest barrier to the transition has been finding enough qualified staff to work in this field – due to an industry that offers lower wages than many fast food and retail opportunities – at a time when even more staff is needed. "When you're providing services in a facility-based model, your ratio of staff members to persons served is going to be much lower," explained Hauth. "Fewer staff are needed

in that environment, because you just don't need that level of supervision, versus when you're in community sites."

For the individuals served by Orange Grove, the change has been scary for other, more personal reasons. Roberts and her staff worked hard to pull together groups of these individuals, to gently communicate to them what would be taking place throughout the transition. According to Hauth, the questions raised were the same that anyone else would ask faced with such an extreme shift. "What will I do tomorrow?" "What is my day going to look like?" "Will I get to be with my friends?" "Is there a way I can be with a friend if I go to a different place?"

"Hearing those questions was sort of a comfort to all of us, because we realized that they're thinking through this in a very logical manner," said Hauth. "Let's take it one step at a time and see how this is going to work,' versus just saying, 'I'm opposed to it, and you'll never convince me otherwise.'"

"They have shown some fear of change like every person does," echoed Roberts. "But we've all increased our expectations about what, together, we can do. And they have certainly risen to the challenge."

The families of the individuals served, in some cases, represented another challenge. "We have started to see a transition in their understanding, and in their willingness," said Roberts. "We've been communicating with them for the last 18 months in many ways, telling them what's coming as we transition more and more into the community."

Turning a corner

Hauth and Roberts estimate that, in the beginning of this process, 90% of the Orange Grove families were skeptical of the transition; 10% were whole-heartedly for it. Now, months later, with Orange Grove successfully serving many of these individuals in employment or volunteer opportunities in fully-inclusive community settings, the percentages are closer to 80% in favor of this shift in how and where services are delivered to their loved ones and 20% still skeptical. Hauth credits ongoing open dialogue with families and caregivers about the changes and the willingness of everyone to listen to and appreciate the success stories for individuals already fully engaged in the community. "We are very pleased at the progress over the last year and a half," Hauth said.

Orange Grove holds family meetings every quarter, and has done so for many years. During the past year, the primary subject at these family meetings has been the transition. More recently, the questions are more likely to pertain to when their son or daughter is going to be more engaged with the community, instead of why can't things remain the way they've been. "It was then that I realized we were starting to turn a corner," said Hauth.

Linda loves her job at Woodbridge preparing specialized sponges (Scrub Daddy is the marketing name) that are sold in interstate commerce.



"When they actually see the success of the individuals, I have yet to have anybody come back to me and say they wished their son or daughter was back in the facility," said Roberts. "No individuals with disabilities have come back and said that either. Come to think of it, we haven't had any staff come back and say they wished they still worked in the facility."

A worthwhile endeavor

Hauth points to Orange Grove's original mission to understand why they are where they are, as an agency, now. He believes Orange Grove was developed, from the jump, to create a level of independence and involvement in the community for the people it has served, including seeking employment opportunities whenever possible. "I truly believe that the community is getting caught up with where we're going," he said. "As we go out to businesses and industries and talk to them, you see a much more 'open mindset' in terms of considering making adaptations in the workforce and a greater willingness to employ people who may not necessarily go about the work the same way that another employee would. They get the fact that making adaptations is worth it for acquiring an employee who is excellent in so many other attributes.

"This community has long supported Orange Grove Center and our mission in innumerable ways," continued Hauth. "But the community's response to our need to create more opportunities for those we serve in the community has exceeded my expectations. People are beginning to understand that facility-based services shouldn't be the default for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities anymore. This community can in fact offer jobs, offer recreation, offer training, offer experiences that in the past it was felt had to be simulated on a campus. This is what's so beautiful about how communities and non-profits and the public sector can work together."

Partners Grad Develops Parent Support Group in East Tennessee

by **Kathy McGee**

Ever been frustrated as a parent of a child with a disability, thinking, “Why does one family get services and we don’t?” “Why is it so hard to get our son a better job?” “Who has the time to dig hard enough to uncover more services?” “Are we doing all that we can do?”

Well, that was me. I graduated from the Council on Developmental Disabilities’ Partners in Policymaking leadership and advocacy training program in 2000. My husband and I have always worked to be informed on how to get the best services for our son. We have two children: one is a 24-year-old, typically-developing nursing student at Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville; her brother is 28 years old and has Down syndrome. So, where was his station in life?

Frustration finally got the best of me. I felt that we were missing out on services because I couldn’t dedicate enough time to searching them out. I wasn’t feeling good about my leadership position in my career, because I always had one foot in the disability community and one foot in building my business. I decided to step out of leadership and dive head-first into building a more solid future for our son.

I had lunch with an acquaintance and we talked nonstop for over an hour. Her adult son with a disability was buying his own home, had 40+ hours of Personal Assistant (PA) services, and was doing adaptive sports like rock climbing. I discovered that she had recently retired from working in the disability field. She asked if I had gotten the letter from the Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities about the Employment and Community First (ECF) CHOICES waiver?

I told her I vaguely remembered getting a letter. I was pretty sure I had blown it off because it said something about jobs in the community. My son already has two part-time jobs now, so I didn’t think we needed that. “Oh no,” she said. “This is something new! You have to apply for this. Call the number and apply. They’re accepting about 1700 families.”

I wasn’t enthused. We had been waiting for services for about 15 years on the DIDD waiver waiting list. “What does it take to get approved?” I asked.



Kathy McGee

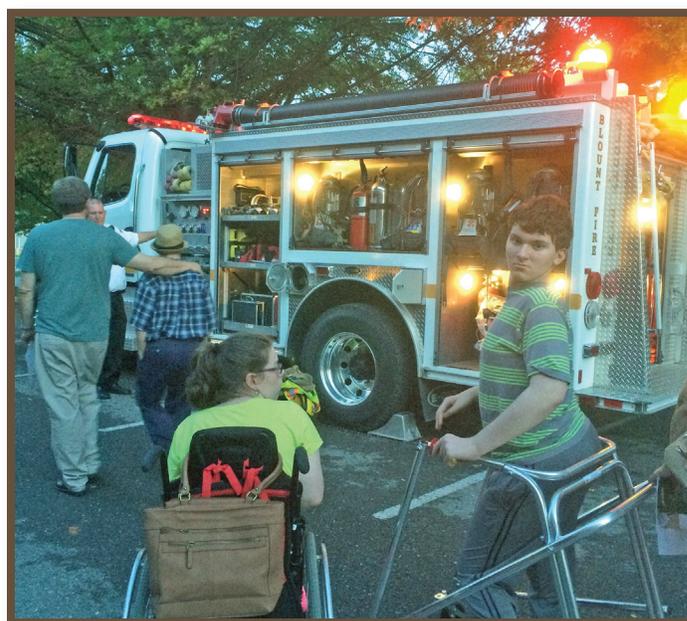
“Not much,” she assured me. “If you’re approved, the first level is \$15,000 per year.”

My head probably spun around and I know my eyes got HUGE!

That was enough to get me in motion. The next day, I called to apply. The man on the phone walked me through the process. A week later, we were approved at the second level of services for ...wait for it...\$30,000! I almost fell off the couch when the intake woman told me.

My friend had also told me more about ABLE (Achieving a Better Life Experience) TN accounts, which I hadn’t opened yet for our son. ABLE is a savings program designed to help individuals with disabilities put aside money to pay for qualified expenses. These accounts provide the opportunity to save and invest with tax-free earnings to help participants maintain independence. So that was the next thing I did. It was so easy!

As soon as I learned about these two extremely valuable pieces of information, I knew I had to share it with other families. I set up my first meeting and emailed everyone I knew who could benefit. Meanwhile, I had just gotten involved with the Koionia Foundation, which runs camps with University of Tennessee Knoxville students for youth and adults with disabilities. They wanted to partner with me to pay for meeting room rent! When the pieces fall into place, you just have to run with it.



I could see that this was going to be big. Parents are HUNGRY for information. Like me, they don't have time to keep digging and some don't have any idea of where to start. I wanted the Parents Group to be the connector!

Weekly, parents are calling or emailing me to get added to the contact list. It has been exciting to see the interest and participation. We began meeting monthly in January. So far, we've shared information on ECF CHOICES and several families have been approved for the program - at least five that I'm aware of. Some have started ABLE accounts too.

Our Parent meeting topics have included retirement options, accessing jobs, creating microboards (an established entity to help find services for your family member with a disability and to help him direct his future), and health and dental issues.

April's meeting was Family Safety Night. We had the Sheriff's Department and the Blount County Fire Department present to our group. It was a terrific meeting! We talked with the Chief on how to desensitize our family members to their fears around emergency situations. We also learned how to get someone who's in a wheelchair outside in case of an emergency event. Then, we took a walk outside to see the firetruck and all of its gizmos. They also provide and install a free smoke alarm for families who need them, including a special one for those who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The best part, though, was that the Sheriff created a form, at my request, so that our families could all go on record with our 911 service. If an emergency arises and crews are dispatched, they will know ahead of time what to expect when they arrive. We can list each family member's disability, any sensitivities, communication challenges and so on. We can even put a photo with it, which the officer can receive on their cruiser's tablet, so they will know who they're looking for.

We're also working on a symbol or logo that can be put on the front door as another alert in case of an emergency. We would love to see this process go to other communities and maybe even go nationwide! We've been invited and have planned a visit to the 911 center in July, so that we can all learn about how they operate.

Future meetings will cover topics like wills, estate planning, living semi-independently with supports, funding streams, camps and recreational opportunities, and so much more.

There's a job search going on now for our son to get more hours and local work. His Employment and Community First waiver will pay for his gym membership as well as his PA. We just started using the transportation service through ECF, so his rides to his job are covered. Other community activities will be covered as well. It will provide respite care, and we're very excited about that too.

So, was it all worth it? You bet! Of course, I'm still learning and as I do...I'm passing it all on!



ABLE Accounts: For information about creating an ABLE savings account, visit abletn.gov to learn about TN's ABLE program. You can also visit the ABLE National Resource Center (www.ablenrc.org) to find information about and compare different ABLE accounts across the country (individuals/families can enroll in any state's ABLE program.)

ECF CHOICES: For more information or to apply for the Employment and Community First CHOICES program, administered by the Bureau of TennCare and operated by Tennessee's health plans or "managed care organizations" (Amerigroup, Blue Cross Blue Shield, United Healthcare), you can visit TennCare's website (<http://tn.gov/tenncare/topic/employment-and-community-first-choices>). TennCare has a "self-referral" form on their website you can fill out on your own to apply for the program.

Need help applying for ECF CHOICES? If you have TennCare, call your health plan and ask for help with a self-referral for Employment and Community First CHOICES. The number is on your TennCare card.

- BlueCare: 888-747-8955
- Amerigroup: 866-840-4991
- United Healthcare Community Plan: 800-690-1606

You can also call your Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Regional Office for help with a self-referral for Employment and Community First CHOICES.

- West Tennessee Regional Office: (866) 372-5709
- Middle Tennessee Regional Office: (800) 654-4839
- East Tennessee Regional Office: (888) 531-9876

Besides being a Partners in Policymaking graduate and the mom of a young adult with Down syndrome, Kathy McGee was instrumental in helping to develop and lead efforts promoting the STEP UP legislation, which enabled youth enrolled in Tennessee's post-secondary programs for students with intellectual disabilities to take advantage of the HOPE lottery scholarship.

Congratulations, 2016-17 Partners in Policymaking™ Graduates!



Jay Anderson, Jr., Chattanooga



Adrian Campbell, Cordova

The Partners in Policymaking Leadership Institute™ is the Council's free leadership and advocacy training program for adults with disabilities and family members of persons with disabilities. Each year, approximately 30 individuals are selected to participate in this intensive training program that introduces attendees to public policy advocacy strategies, state and federal legislation impacting people with disabilities, best practices in community inclusion, creative programs for people with disabilities, opportunities to network with other members of the diverse disability community from across the state, and much more.

In April 2017, our 2016-2017 class of 29 Partners participants graduated from the program. Congratulations and welcome to the Partners family of over 500 disability advocates throughout Tennessee!

The deadline for the 2017-18 class was the end of April, but you can visit the Partners page on our website to learn how to apply for future classes.

Learn more at www.tn.gov/cdd/article/partners-in-policymaking.



Bobbie Fields, Memphis



Alicia Hall, Memphis



Jimmy Jackson, Elizabethton



Tonika Jordan, Clarksville



Bonnie Micheli, Fairview



Iris Miller, Cordova



Dana Mullican, McMinnville



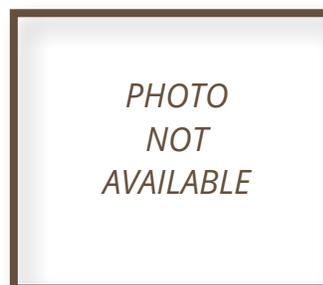
DeAnna Parker, Medina



David Pointer, Murfreesboro



Amanda Reedy, Eads



Nancy Rogers, Chattanooga



LeVon Sheegog, Memphis



Tatjana Anderson, Mount Juliet



Shontie Brown, Memphis



Sarah Bynum, Memphis



Jeannette Childress, Chattanooga



Allison Donald, Memphis



Clay Dyer, Murfreesboro



Todd Liebergen, Madison



Michelle Madron, Old Hickory



Chris Meyer, Brentwood



Laura Payne, Knoxville



Jessica Peggs, Bartlett



Nicholas Pinter, Nashville



Gina Summer, Jackson



Petra Walls, Pleasant View



Martez Williams, Nashville

IDEAL Internship Program Promotes Inclusion

by Lacey Klotz, Public Relations Specialist, Lipscomb University

Portions of this article originally appeared on the Lipscomb University website.



Jason Rogers, Lipscomb IDEAL program intern in Gov. Haslam's Constituent Services office, at his desk

Every Tuesday and Thursday at noon, Jason Rogers puts on a tie, his best pair of slacks and shoes, and heads to the Tennessee State Capitol for his internship in Governor Bill Haslam's office.

A native of Chattanooga, Rogers says for as long

as he can remember, his dream was to move to Nashville, live independently and be a part of Lipscomb's Igniting the Dream of Education and Access at Lipscomb (IDEAL) program.

Today, Rogers is a first-year student in the IDEAL program and one of two students in the IDEAL residential pilot program where he lives independently on-campus. He is also the first intern at the Governor's office with a disability and his motivation for being there is simple. "I want to help people within the state of Tennessee," said Rogers.

Created in 2013 by Lipscomb's College of Education with a grant from the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities, IDEAL is a two-year program that provides education and workplace training to students with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities, while also encouraging friendships and increased independent living skills that can lead to a better quality of life.

"Jason went through the same interview process as everyone else," said Joanna Wagner, program manager for off-campus job development for the IDEAL program. "He is working with the Office of Constituent Services in the scheduling office primarily.

He has a job coach, which is a paid student of Lipscomb University who comes and coaches him on-site, but he is from Chattanooga and moved to Nashville and loves everything about the state of Tennessee, so he is the perfect choice for this internship."

Wanda Willis, Council Executive Director, shared how the Council became aware of this internship opportunity through

the Governor's Office. "Thanks to our Deputy Director Lynette Porter, we learned about the Governor's Internship Program and shared that information with Lipscomb IDEAL staff. We had a very positive meeting with Governor Haslam's staff to discuss the application process and recruiting potential applicants among students with intellectual and developmental disabilities attending



Rep. Marc Gravitt (East Ridge) honoring Jason with a proclamation before the House of Representatives

inclusive higher education programs. We couldn't be more thrilled that Jason was selected for this internship and that it's been such a successful experience for all involved. We hope many other students with disabilities follow in Jason's footsteps!"

According to the National Report on Employment Services Outcomes, working-age adults with disabilities are employees at a rate of only 23 percent in Tennessee, and those working will earn a yearly-household income that is on average \$20,000 less than those without a disability.

To combat this statistic, Lipscomb's IDEAL program partners with both the Lipscomb community as well as the Nashville business community to provide students with on-campus and off-campus internship opportunities to help prepare them for real world work settings.

"The reason that a program like IDEAL is important, not only for our students with disabilities but also for our students without disabilities, is that we want the people going out into the world and getting jobs, being employed, getting very used to and very comfortable with the idea of inclusion," said Wagner. "Our students have the same wants and needs and desires as any student does: they want to live independently, they want to pay taxes and contribute back to their community and an inclusive program like IDEAL allows them a safe environment to practice those skills, so that when they complete the program, they are out contributing just like anyone else."



Gov. Haslam pictured with intern Jason Rogers, Council on Developmental Disabilities staff, and others involved in supporting this internship effort

Prepares Students For Real-World Work Setting

This semester, IDEAL students are interning in several offices on Lipscomb's campus, as well as off campus at the Nashville Food Project, Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee, Divine Art Café, Friends of Warner Parks and Discovery Center at Murfree Spring.

Wagner said just like anyone in their first job or interview, the IDEAL program staff have conversations about how to talk to a supervisor in an email, how to understand and ask questions about certain tasks and how to ask questions when you don't understand. There are also specific training sessions for job coaches and internship advisers so they will be prepared to best support the student at the job site.

"One thing we really work on with our job coaches, and something we have worked with the staff of the Governor's office, is introducing Jason to the environment and remembering that he is no different than any other employee," said Wagner. "The job coach is there for any reasonable accommodation that needs to be made; but just like you and I, everyone needs accommodations now and then.

"When Jason came in, it was so important for him to understand the important step he was taking," continued Wagner. "Jason has completely shined in this role, but this workplace has also realized he is just an employee. The tasks that he has been given are the same tasks that any other intern would be given and I think

that has helped shaped people's mentalities about the world of disabilities as well."



Wanda Willis (left) and Lynette Porter (right) with Jason

On April 24, Jason was recognized by Tennessee's House of Representatives with a proclamation honoring his service as an intern with Constituent Services. The Council extends our thanks to Jason's legislator, Rep. Marc Gravitt, as well as Rep. Gravitt's legislative staffer Chance Von Dette, for providing this opportunity for legislators and the public to learn about and celebrate Jason's hard work!

Supported Decision-Making: What It Is, How It Works and Why It's Important

by Lauren Pearcy, Director of Public Policy and Ned Andrew Solomon, Director of Partners in Policymaking™ Leadership Institute

Breaking Ground would also like to thank STEP (Support and Training for Exceptional Parents) TN for its excellent Transition Guide resource on Supported Decision-Making.

When the Council first heard about the concept of Supported Decision-Making (SDM), it seemed to fit right in with part of our agency's mission – to work to ensure that the fundamental rights of individuals with disabilities are protected, and that these same individuals are encouraged to make informed choices about the decisions that will affect their lives.

To learn more about SDM, and to spread the word about this new way of thinking about assisting people with disabilities, the Council brought in national SDM expert Jonathan Martinis for a week of meetings and presentations to different community

groups, including State and advocacy agency representatives, attorneys, representatives of the state's Managed Care Organizations, and the Partners in Policymaking current class and graduates assembled for their 2017 Annual Reunion Conference.

Jonathan Martinis is the Senior Director for Law and Policy for The Burton Blatt Institute at Syracuse University. He has over 20 years' experience representing people with disabilities to protect their legal and human rights, including precedent-setting cases securing access to critical community-based services. In 2013, he represented Margaret "Jenny" Hatch in the national "Justice for Jenny" case – the first to hold that a person has the right to use Supported Decision-Making to make her

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own life choices instead of being subjected to a permanent, plenary guardianship (also known as “conservatorship” in some states like Tennessee).

So, what exactly is SDM?

SDM is a tool that allows people with disabilities to retain – very important word there! – their decision-making capacity by choosing trusted people that they know that can support them in making choices. Those “trusted people” might be friends, family members or professionals. These “supporters” agree to help the person with a disability understand and carefully consider decisions, and then effectively communicate those decisions.

How is SDM different from other existing options?

The existing options for helping people with disabilities make decisions typically give the authority to a person – or entity – that serves as a “substitute decision-maker”, especially in circumstances where a person becomes “incapacitated”, or, in other words, legally unfit or incapable of making those decisions. Terms like “conservatorships”, “guardianships”, and “powers of attorney” are examples of these options where a “substitute” makes a decision on behalf of a person with a disability, sometimes without even consulting with the person whose life will be most affected by that decision. The problem is, these options overlook the fact that most people with disabilities are capable of making decisions. SDM offers a middle ground: a person can access assistance from the “supporter” without giving up the right to make their own decisions.

Additionally, these options are complicated, and almost always require the involvement of the court system. Furthermore, they are very difficult to reverse, or undo once they are in place.

SDM does not require a court process. It can be as informal as a verbal agreement with someone – much like the way you and I make decisions by consulting trusted friends and families - or formalized in a document stating that these particular trusted individuals will help the person with a disability make decisions, not make decisions for him.

How would SDM actually work?

As in all the best individualized supports for individuals with disabilities, SDM will look different for everyone. Again, basically, it means utilizing tools and supports to help a person with a disability understand, make and communicate his or her own choices. That might include:

- Using plain language materials or using information in a visual or audio format



Jonathan Martinis and Jenny Hatch

- Allowing extra time to discuss choices
- Creating lists of possible pros and cons of a particular choice or decision
- Bringing a supporter along to important meetings to take notes and to help process the delivered information

SDM is an option that falls between offering no support for a person to make decisions, and that person giving up his or her right to make decisions by empowering someone else to make them. No option is perfect for everyone, and it helps to be fully informed about how each of the options work, before entering into a situation that might not be easily changed.

More information is available at:

- The National Resource Center for Supported Decision-Making - www.supporteddecisionmaking.org
- The Autistic Self-Advocacy Network - autisticadvocacy.org/tag/supported-decision-making
- The Parent Guide to Getting Ready for the Age of Majority - Bit.ly/2nssKcX

Several disability organizations in Tennessee, including the Disability Policy Alliance (Disability Rights TN, the Statewide Independent Living Council of TN, The Arc TN, and the Council), recently coordinated a publication explaining SDM. This “white paper” is entitled “Supported Decision-Making: Creating A Continuum of Choice: and can be viewed on the Disability Rights TN website. [Visit www.disabilityrightstn.org/resources; navigate to “March 2017” blog posts]

For more information about SDM from a Council staff member, please contact Lauren Percy, Director of Public Policy, at 615.741.5019, or lauren.j.pearcy@tn.gov.

SDM SIDEBAR:

During the 2017 legislative session in Tennessee, the Council collaborated with a workgroup of other disability organizations on a bill that would make Supported Decision-Making a formal option for those who need assistance making decisions. The bill is called "The Supported Decision-Making Agreement Act (SB264 / HB941)". Tennessee State Senator Becky Massey (R-Knoxville) and State Representative Mike Carter (R-Ooltewah) sponsored the bill, with support by The Arc Tennessee. The bill is modeled after a law enacted recently in Texas. Tennessee would be the third state in the nation, after Texas and Delaware, to pass legislation related to supported decision-making.

What does the bill do?

The purpose of the bill, as it was introduced, is "to define and authorize a legal option for adults with disabilities who seek assistance in making certain decisions about their lives, such as financial, medical, and other life decisions, but choose to retain their rights as the ultimate decision-maker about those decisions rather than seeking a legal representative to make such decisions on their behalf." During legislative session, there was much debate over how SDM should be operationalized in Tennessee. The first draft of the bill was modeled after legislation passed in Texas, which dictated an official agreement form which must be signed by both the person with a disability and the supporter and publicly notarized. However, legal experts and advocates alike raised concerns about prescribing such a form - both because it feels like a 'one size fits all' method and because of concern it would not be accepted in the very situations it's intended to be used, like doctor's offices and banks.

What happens next?

Ultimately, the sponsors of the bill decided to defer the bill to "Summer Study", which is a special session for the committee members that will take place before the next legislative session begins, for the purpose of brainstorming ways to improve the bill so that it works as intended: as an option for people who are capable of making their own decisions to still access assistance. Tennessee's legislative session is a two-year timeframe, so bills that are deferred this way are still considered "alive" and do not have to be re-introduced. The Council's Executive Director and Public Policy Director will remain closely involved throughout the summer study process and the next session of the legislature.

Blind Athlete "Grows" with Achilles Running Program

by Ned Andrew Solomon

Stephanie Zundel became blind at age three, due to an allergic reaction to Children's Motrin. This development did not hold her back for long.

In 3rd grade Stephanie started taking karate, specifically White Tiger Kenpo, a mixed martial art. Over time she earned her Junior and Senior Black Belts, and was immersed in the sport through high school. She also began boxing at age 10 - a sport Stephanie still does today, though she's more inclined to go the kickboxing route.



Stephanie Zundel at Boston Marathon.

"When I was home in New Jersey I belonged to a boxing gym close to my house," said Stephanie. "I went with one of my karate instructors - he's the one who introduced me. I wouldn't do it necessarily to fight people; it was more for a good workout."

Stephanie would move through all the various boxing stations - the speed bag, the heavy bag, the double end bag. Then she would go into the ring with the instructor and he'd teach her how to use different combinations. Stephanie was able to do most of this without sighted support.

"Sometimes I needed help finding which stations were empty," she explained. "During the actual station activities I didn't need help. When I was in the boxing ring working through the different combinations, the instructor who was working with me would clap his mitts, so I could hear where he was going. A lot of times I didn't need him to clap - I just used my ears to hear where he was."

In high school, Stephanie expanded her athletic pursuits to include track. She just trained with the team, doing warm-ups and mile runs, instead of competing. When she moved to Nashville for her sophomore year of college at Vanderbilt University, her roommates signed up for the Country Music Half Marathon, and asked Stephanie if she'd like to join them.

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Stephanie was still not a big fan of running, much preferring other types of exercise. But she eventually said, “yes”, signed up and began to train regularly, because, if you know anything about Stephanie, she never does anything halfway. “Then, one of my blind friends told me that she had joined Achilles, and was training for the same race,” she recalled. “So I asked what Achilles was.”

Achilles International was established in 1983 by Dick Traum, a runner with a prosthetic leg, to encourage other people with disabilities to participate in mainstream athletics. Achilles provides support, training, and technical expertise to runners at all levels. Their international, national and local chapters include athletes with all kinds of disabilities, such as blindness, stroke, cerebral palsy, paraplegia, traumatic head injury, and many others. With the support of volunteer guides, athletes participate in workouts and races using crutches, wheelchairs, hand cycles, prostheses, or without aid at all.

Achilles International Nashville is the local chapter of Achilles International. The second largest chapter behind New York, Achilles Nashville has over 200 registered volunteer guides and over 100 registered athletes. Athletes with disabilities take part in athletic events in order to promote personal achievement, enhance self-esteem, and lower barriers to living a fulfilling life. Volunteer Guides come from all walks of life, and help the runners with disabilities navigate the environment in many ways, including functioning as an athlete’s eyes, ears, navigational guide, and motivator; helping with special equipment such as a tether or hand cycle; and providing race-day logistics such as pinning on a number, navigating through the crowd to the start line, and ultimately across the finish line.

At the time, conveniently, the Nashville Achilles program was conducting Saturday morning runs near Vanderbilt, so Stephanie joined them for one and really enjoyed it. “All the people were so great, and so sweet,” said Stephanie. “At that point I still wasn’t



Stephanie Zundel (in the blue sweatshirt) with volunteer guides at the New York City November 2016 Marathon



Runner Stephanie Zundel on left, Achilles Guide Amy Harris on right.

into running as much. But I decided to stick with Achilles because I really wanted a consistent running schedule, and they would definitely help with that, with their regular Wednesday night and Saturday morning runs.”

Soon after, Stephanie ran the Country Music Half Marathon with Volunteer Guide, Harvey Freeman. “After I ran my first half-marathon, something just clicked,” Stephanie said. “I really loved running. Rather than it being something that stressed me out, it was something that helped me de-stress.”

Since then, Stephanie has made the rounds. With Harvey and her other regular Volunteer Guide, Amy Harris, Stephanie has run a number of smaller races in Nashville, a Princess Half marathon in Disneyworld, the New York City Marathon this past November, and the Boston Marathon in April. “And now running is one of my biggest passions, ever,” she said. “I just find it very freeing. I kind of think of running as my ‘me time’. It’s not like a team sport, where you’re worrying, ‘if I don’t meet this goal or do this it’s going to impact other people’. I’m working on strengthening myself. It’s my time to just de-stress from the day, enjoy life, and focus on me being happy.”

“I really love Achilles,” continued Stephanie. “I’ve made so many great friendships. The athletes definitely benefit a whole lot from the guides, but I think the guides benefit from the athletes too.

Achilles never pressures you to do something you don't want to do. You grow with Achilles. Some people do marathons, some do 5-Ks, some people work on speed, some on distance. Everybody's doing different things, but everyone gets along so well."

Besides participating in two of the country's biggest marathons, Stephanie can now add Vanderbilt graduate to her growing list of accomplishments. Having majored in Child Studies and minoring in Special Education and Sociology, Stephanie was recently accepted into Vanderbilt's School Counseling graduate program.

"For me, training for and running the New York City and Boston Marathons has really taught me about perseverance," Stephanie said. "Even though School Counseling doesn't have to do with

running or exercise, I think the lessons that running teaches me has a lot to do with what I'm going to do in my future. Remembering how it felt to persevere throughout the NYC Marathon - when it got really hilly, and when I was doing those big bridges, when I thought it was too hard and I just wanted to give up. That relates a lot to the situations that these children are going to be going through - not running and going up hills, but going through hardships, and the different challenges that life will present them. I hope to teach them about that perseverance, and not to give up even if you feel like you really want to. You have to continue to fight your battles because you can accomplish huge things that you don't think you're going to be able to along the way."

For more information on Achilles, visit www.achillesnashville.org.

Remembering Leaders in Our Community

Rick Davis

Council member Rick Davis passed away on April 2 after several months of complications following a surgery in October. Rick served on the Council since being appointed by Governor Haslam in August 2012 to represent the Southeast Development District. He lived in Hixson and worked as a Business Specialist at the TVA Sequoyah Nuclear Plant. He was a graduate of Memphis State University, with a degree in Mathematical Sciences.

He played for and coached The Chattanooga Speeders, a power wheelchair soccer team, and was very passionate about sports. Rick previously served on the Tennessee Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC of Tennessee), the CARTA Board for Accessible Transportation and was a recipient of the United Way Courage Award.

In a 2012 interview for Breaking Ground about his appointment to the Council, we asked Rick about his greatest success as a person with a



disability. He shared: "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." Rick traveled on his own to Washington, D.C. to see his favorite singer, Glen Campbell, perform on his goodbye tour. The Council staff and members will miss Rick and his independent spirit greatly.

Kimmie Jones

Kimmie (Kimberly) Jones, social media and outreach coordinator for Tennessee Disability Pathfinder, passed away on April 4 after a brief illness. We extend our sympathies to our colleagues at Pathfinder and Vanderbilt Kennedy Center, and Kimmie's friends and family.

Wanda Willis, our Executive Director shared about Kimmie: "Kimmie was a pleasure to work with - she was bright, creative and dedicated to her work,



and always willing to assist others. She elevated Pathfinder's visibility and impact, reaching new audiences through social media and storytelling. Her unique voice and contributions will be missed by the Council and the broader Tennessee disability community."

Tracey McCartney

The Council extends our sympathies to our partners at the Tennessee Fair Housing

Council on the passing of their Executive Director, Tracey McCartney, on April 11. Since joining the Tennessee Fair Housing Council in February 1998, Tracey provided exemplary leadership, management, and legal service for the Housing Council. She was a dedicated advocate for expanding housing opportunities to all, including those with disabilities. She was a great partner in our work to support the annual Fair Housing Conference to include a focus on disability issues and to involve individuals with disabilities in fair housing work.



Council on Autism Spectrum Disorder is a First Step in the Right Direction

by John Shouse

This blog originally appeared on the TennesseeWorks website blog, "Rise to Work" (www.tennesseeworks.org/blog/). It has been shortened slightly for publication here.

Council introduction by Lauren Percy, Director of Public Policy, Council on Developmental Disabilities:

The Tennessee General Assembly adjourned on May 10, meaning that the first of the two-year legislative cycle for the 110th General Assembly is over. During this past session, one of the biggest successes for the disability community was the passage of SB1390/HB1206 which created the Tennessee Council on Autism Spectrum Disorder. The group, which becomes effective and can start meeting after July 1, will be led by the Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities under the leadership of the newly hired Director of Developmental Disabilities, Patricia Edmiston. We are honored that a representative from our team - the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities - will be an appointed member of the Autism Council. We look forward to rolling up our sleeves and digging into the important work this group is tasked with accomplishing by law: developing an integrated system of services for individuals with autism spectrum disorder.

This bill is the product of years of advocacy and patience by Tennessee's disability community who share a passion for improving services for Tennesseans who have autism. A person who was there from the start, John Shouse, authored the blog post below detailing the history behind this new law. The blog hits on themes that we, the Council, see so often in the policy world: the work was initiated by a voluntary, grassroots partnership; the group quickly realized that a tremendous amount was already going on across Tennessee but it was not organized or coordinated; and a dedicated planning council would be necessary to sustain an effective effort. It is a huge accomplishment to see the Autism Council become law this year. We know there is hard work ahead, and are anxious to get started. Read on to learn more about the history of this effort, as well as more details about the law itself:

One of the successes of this legislative session in Tennessee is that Gov. Bill Haslam recently signed into law a bill passed by both the Tennessee House and Senate, which, as enacted, establishes the Tennessee Council on Autism Spectrum Disorder.

What exactly is the purpose of this Council, and how is it likely to impact the lives of Tennesseans living with autism and their families?

To answer that question, we must first go back and take a brief look at the history of the bills that created this council, and how they came to be introduced in the first place.

The idea for such a council was built upon work done over the past several years by the Tennessee Autism Summit Team. The Summit Team is a voluntary partnership of stakeholders across the public, private and nonprofit sectors. The Summit Team was created when Tennessee's two University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (at the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center in Nashville and the UT Boling Center in Memphis) hosted the Southeast Regional Autism Summit for the Association of University Centers on Disabilities. This summit, held in 2009, brought together leaders from Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina and Kentucky to discuss the current state of services for young children with or at risk for autism and related disabilities. I was very pleased to have been asked to be part of that initial summit.

For those of us from Tennessee who were present at that initial 2009 summit, it was immediately obvious that we needed to take the initiative to keep our group going, to continue the dialogue we started that day with stakeholders from across the state, and to see if we could build upon the energy and the ideas shared there.

One of the lessons from that initial summit, and from our first few meetings afterward, was that there was already more going on in our state regarding autism than any of us might have imagined. To be sure, we could see from the outset that Tennessee had a long road ahead to achieve the same levels of support that were commonplace in some of our neighboring states, and in other states across the country. One of the problems we discovered was that too much of what WAS happening here was being done in isolation, without adequate knowledge across systems, departments, organizations, etc. of what other parties were doing.

There was simply far too little coordination and communication going on. And frankly, there was almost no deliberate strategic approach to ensure that any such coordination would EVER happen.

The Tennessee Autism Summit Team secured a State Planning Grant from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The stated outcome of the grant was to make recommendations for the creation of a Comprehensive, Coordinated System of Care around autism. This

would lead to the preparation of the “Tennessee Autism Plan”, published in 2014.

Fortunately, the core principles that define a “System of Care” are already enumerated in state law in Tennessee. These principles are:

- A comprehensive array of services addressing physical, emotional, social, and educational needs.
- Individualized services based on the unique needs and potential of each individual, and guided by an individualized service plan.
- Services provided in the least restrictive environment.
- Families as full partners in all aspects of planning and delivering services.
- Links between agencies and programs with mechanisms for planning, developing, integrating and coordinating services.
- Promotion of early identification and intervention that enhances the likelihood of positive outcomes.
- Case management or similar mechanisms provided to each individual to ensure that services are provided in a coordinated and integrated manner that can address changing needs.
- Smooth transitions from youth to adulthood with the supports and services needed.
- Services responsive to the cultural and linguistic needs of all individuals.

Another aspect of what the Autism Summit Team did as a part of our work was to engage in different ways of communicating with a broader base of stakeholders across the state. This included focused workgroups with people on the spectrum, families, service providers, advocacy groups, and state agencies, among others. We also developed a comprehensive survey to find out

the priorities of families, individuals, caregivers, etc. And, notably, we conducted a series of Community Conversations across the state to allow those stakeholders to meet, engage, and bounce ideas off one another in open forum.

Additionally, we were very interested in looking at how other states with more mature and well-developed Systems of Care in autism had “gotten there”. One of the things we saw very quickly was that for many of the states where we knew that they were doing a “good job” providing autism services and programs, nearly all of them had at least some kind of “home” in state government for autism. Those states had a planning council, or a “Blue-Ribbon Panel”, or an office housed within a state government department, or even a stand-alone Department of Autism Services. By formalizing a “home base” in state government, these states could take a strategic approach to coordinating efforts surrounding autism.

With the guidance and leadership of the Tennessee Disability Coalition, the Autism Summit Team began work on crafting how this idea might become a reality in Tennessee. To that end, House Bill HB0384 introduced by Rep. Ryan Williams, R- Cookeville, and Senate Bill SB0199 introduced by Sen. Doug Overbey, R-Maryville, began working their way through the legislature. Both bills passed their respective houses early in this year’s legislative session, and it was signed by Gov. Haslam in April! You can read the bill at www.capitol.tn.gov/Bills/110/Bill/SB0199.pdf.

Many kind thanks to all of you who took the time to speak personally to a legislator about the need for this council, to write letters or emails or make phone calls. When our community comes together with shared purpose, we CAN get things done!

John Shouse is president of The Arc Tennessee Board of Directors, chair of the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center Community Advisory Council, parent of three children, including a son on the autism spectrum, and a Partners in Policymaking graduate.

ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR THE 2017-18 PARTNERS IN POLICYMAKING™ CLASS

WHAT IS PARTNERS?

The Partners in Policymaking™ Leadership Institute is a leadership, advocacy and self-advocacy training program for adults with disabilities and family members of persons with disabilities from across the state, sponsored by the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities.

WHEN WILL THE PARTNERS TRAINING TAKE PLACE?

September, October and November, and January, February, March and April. Most Partners training weekends begin at 12 pm on Friday, and continue until 3 pm on Saturday. Accepted Partners must agree to attend all seven sessions.

WHERE WILL IT TAKE PLACE? At a hotel in Middle Tennessee.

WHAT DOES IT COST?

There is no cost for the training, sleeping rooms or meals on-site during the Partners weekend sessions. Partners will be reimbursed for mileage to and from the Partners session approximately two weeks after each weekend training.

HOW DOES ONE APPLY?

Complete the two-page application, which can be accessed on the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities website at www.tn.gov/cdd or by contacting Partners Director Ned Andrew Solomon at 615.532.6556 or ned.solomon@tn.gov.

Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities

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