



The Future of Disability...a Big Ideas event! Session Descriptions

FASHION IS FOR EVERY BODY

Alicia Searcy

Challenging stereotypes and changing lives through the transformative power of fashion, Fashion Is For Every Body uses fashion to promote body positivity and self-esteem while seeking inclusion within the fashion industry for adults of all ages, sizes and abilities.

A PICTURE IS WORTH 1,000 WORDS: GIVING A VOICE TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Jen Vogus

Developed by the parent of a child who is nonverbal, personal photo books have become a powerful tool for communication, change and empowerment - giving a new voice to the voiceless, building relationships and changing perspectives to depict abilities and fullness instead of lack. Originally created as a way to enhance her son's communication with teachers, other students and family, Jen Vogus also discovered an engaging tool for building the skills of typing, writing, and storytelling as well as her own passion for photography. Jen shares her story and details her process for building the books, and inspiring others to engage in new ways to use their phone. A positive, uplifting project throughout the year, it can easily be adapted to enhance others' lives.

WELL-BEING OF OUR WORKFORCE

John Dickerson

What might happen to our workforce crisis if we shifted our focus from "coverage" and "compliance" to the well-being of the people who are the foundation of our service delivery system? What if we took "person-centeredness" and applied its principles to the very people who support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities? Join me as I share the tools and steps you can take to focus on the WELL-BEING of your staff and yourself. These tools and steps may give you big ideas about how to meet this next big challenge we face.

TEAPOT DIPLOMATS - BUILDING UP STEAM

Jessica Allen

The Teapot Diplomat program can open conversations in the community around what individuals with disabilities – leaders, innovators and partners -- must offer rather than what they need. Conceived in 2016, individuals with disabilities not only learn art techniques, but they also use those techniques to help themselves and help others. The teapot art would be used to start community conversations. When the first Teapot Diplomats were invited to help Metro Nashville Police Cadets with diversity training, the potential impact of the pilot program was seen. You can be an Honorary Teapot Diplomat by providing the program with community contacts for conversations. Help this program build up steam so it can pour out into the community.

BARRIER-FREE MINDSET: EXPECTATIONS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Waverly Ann Harris

Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) often face barriers to relationships, employment, community engagement, and even personal choice. Individuals with IDD are often met with double standards, resulting in behaviors that are not consequence of a disability, rather a response to the behaviors of their loved ones, teachers, employers, and community. To create a culture of genuine inclusion, it is imperative that expectations are clearly defined and ALL individuals are held accountable. We can no longer hold individuals with IDD to standards that are undefined and unmatched to standards of their typical peers. And we can no longer escape accountability for setting clear expectations and equitable consequences. Going forward, we will choose to change our mindset and will remove barriers to individuals with IDD by changing the behaviors of those around them.

MY RIGHT TO THE RIGHT LIFE

Susan Arwood and Nick Filarelli

A focus on educating people and the public about rights has resulted in many unexpected positive changes for individuals with disabilities, the agency and its employees. Representatives from Core Services of Northeast Tennessee will share about their ongoing activities and practices supporting people in learning and exercising their rights. These efforts are not only paying dividends in an improved quality of life for people supported, but have also contributed toward a person-centered environment that has reduced DSP turnover and increased enrollment. Educating and supporting people to exercise their rights has many positive implications for the future including more autonomy for people supported, less dependence on support services and the opportunity for people with disabilities to be fully integrated in their communities.

HARNESSING THE AUTISM ADVANTAGE: FUELING INNOVATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY ECONOMY

Keivan Stassen

There is a great need and opportunity for creating, understanding and systematizing interventions for individuals with autism, in particular autistic adults as they make the crucial transitions from high school to college to employment to career -- transitions that will shape their trajectories for the rest of their lives. At the same time, the information age and the data-intensive nature of work in the 21st century economy has opened new avenues for meaningful engagement of individuals with innate talents uniquely well suited to detailed, quantitative, data-immersive employment. In many cities there is an unmet demand for talented, highly skilled and capable individuals in the sectors such as technology, finance, cyber-security, healthcare analytics and others. Within this context, a new paradigm has emerged to look beyond the traditional deficit view of autism; to instead understand and harness the unique abilities of neurodiverse individuals to create systems of mutual benefit in education, research and the private sector. Indeed, if we can understand and leverage the unique capabilities of autistic individuals to fuel innovation in the 21st century economy, we will have significantly addressed one of the emergent grand challenges of our time. This talk will highlight a new Nashville-based model employment pipeline for autistic adults, improving quality of life for individuals and the bottom line for partnering businesses.

TINY HOUSE, TITANIC SOLUTION: HOW WE BUILT OUR SON A HOME OF HIS OWN

Nan Kennedy

Where could our son on the autism spectrum live? He wanted a place that offered independence and respected his privacy, yet was supportive. He needed sufficient space, but not so much that it would overwhelm. He could leverage some financial resources for housing, but he didn't want to be saddled with debt.

We all desire a place of our own, but we all have constraints. A tiny house can be a solution for someone who has limited resources and still needs support, yet prefers to live alone and not with family, roommates or in an arranged community setting. A tiny house can fill this niche, serving either as long-term housing or as a stepping stone to greater independence.

The challenges associated with building a tiny house include zoning and permit regulations, electricity, internet access and plumbing and sewage lines. Finding creative work-arounds is possible, but difficult. If more people with disabilities are to benefit from this housing option, as our son has, then the barriers to building these homes need to be addressed.

RIDE ON

Andrea Barbour and Larry McGoogin

Vital to our daily lives, transportation impacts everything that we do. With the emergence of fuel efficient, electric and autonomous vehicles, the way we move and transport items and people is changing rapidly. Self-driving cars and buses could transform how persons -- including those with disabilities and the ever-growing aging population -- commute, work, travel for leisure, get to appointments and do errands. Ridesharing, another technology-based transportation tool, also will continue to change the way people get around.

For many, cars are currently the main mode of transportation. But as the Middle Tennessee region continues to grow and municipalities begin to plan for the future, all transportation modes and users must be included in the planning process. While the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 requires public transportation agencies to provide paratransit, obviously additional options are needed. We will discuss the trends seen within the state and region, as well as innovations seen in other states across the U.S. We will explore what is currently available, as well as the possible future of transportation and its potential impacts on persons with disabilities.

DREAMS, DOLLARS AND DEMOGRAPHICS - A NEW DESIGN

John Dickerson

Our greatest success is also our greatest challenge. We have built a community system that goes beyond what our founders ever imagined. The system is measured in people served, dollars spent, and lives changed. Yet three things are forcing us to address this very system and find a new design.

Dreams, dollars and demographics are all changing. The dreams of people with disabilities and their families are constantly changing and are as unique as each family situation. Dollars are always scarce, but even more so when you want to respond to what is really wanted and needed. Dreams never seem to fit the funding model even when it saves money. Demographics of both our workforce and the individuals we support are changing.

We need a new design that matches these three changing realities. It will take government, agencies and communities to collectively change. This big idea is a new design framework that could help you develop your own answer for your community and everyone you support, in partnership with those who fund you, those who regulate you and most importantly, those you serve.

SUPERHEROES IN DISGUISE

Allison Gauld

What is your super power? Can you fly? Become invisible? Move mountains? The story you often hear about an individual with a disability is a story of limits, struggles, and failures. It is easy to become focused on the deficits and miss the celebration. In an effort to ensure that a child has the supports to thrive and become successful, organizations target and identify the needs of the individual. They see the individual only as Lois Lane saw Clark Kent. But what would happen if we all saw through the disguise and viewed the individual as their true Superman self? As an educator I am honored and privileged enough to witness students with disabilities demonstrating their super powers. I have seen students fly. I have been awed by their ability to become invisible. I have witnessed the movement of mountains. And these are just a few of the awesome powers of the individuals with disabilities, who I have been fortunate enough to know and teach. I will share with you their stories and the lessons learned. We have accomplished a great deal in creating opportunities for all, but there is more work to do. Each of us has the power within us to shape and create the future of disability. This presentation will help you find your superhero and maybe even put on a cape of your own.

FROM BARRIERS TO BELONGING: PUSHING PAST INCLUSION

Erik Carter

Belonging is a more important and ambitious goal than inclusion. I'm sharing about our work around this idea. People want to be more than integrated or included, they want to belong. And so, I'll talk about ten dimensions of belonging that can serve as markers for all we do. Are people with disabilities: present, invited, welcomed, known, accepted, supported, cared for, befriended, needed and loved? These dimensions of belonging give us a different way to evaluate the impact of the services and supports we delivered.

MY LIFE, MY CIRCLE OF SUPPORT(S)

Scott Finney

In many ways, my life is incredibly ordinary. I live in an apartment. I have a full-time job. I have family and friends. I pay bills. I go out to eat. I experience joy, anger, happiness, sadness and loss. What makes my journey extraordinary is that I have an intellectual disability and I was born during an era where it was very common for families to place people like me into institutions. My story highlights the fact that nearly anything is possible with high expectations, determination, and a great circle of friends, family and co-workers to support me on my journey.

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