In early October, NDCPD hosted the US – Nordic Conference on Intellectual Disabilities. This conference was co-sponsored by Minot State University partner Harstad University College of Norway, along with the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in Washington, DC and the National Center for Competence in Intellectual Disabilities in Trondheim, Norway. For three days, approximately 60 international colleagues from across the US and from Norway and Sweden attended plenary and keynote sessions, discussed poster presentations, and held informal discussions about similarities and differences between US and Nordic systems of services for persons with intellectual disabilities. These discussions focused on the four themes of school inclusion, employment, community living and healthcare.

Conference participants had extremely engaging conversations. It was exciting to see individuals from Sweden, North Dakota, Utah, and Norway all talking about how to best serve and support persons with intellectual disabilities. It was quickly apparent that we each had something to learn from the others at the conference. Professors in Norway were interested in how UCEDDs like NDCPD were organized and how we provided services, training and research through our university and public relationships. Participants in the US were enthralled during discussions about local ownership and control of public services at the township level in Norway. And there were many more similar discussions across numerous topics at the meetings.
Learning from our International Colleagues: Continued

Several things became evident to me while watching and participating in these discussions. First, we all have similar philosophical and conceptual perspectives on intellectual disabilities and human rights. Ideas of support and community involvement, the importance of having and holding jobs, and securing meaningful employment were central and common to our discussions. Second, the participants had varying approaches in implementing our visions and concepts that were influenced by geographical and political environments. For example, if one wants to influence services for a particular individual in Norway, s/he would work closely with the local township mayor and board. In the US, we might approach this as a state or national systems issue, or work through legal or quasi-legal mechanisms. So while the end result might be the same (the individual would receive needed services), our methodology for assuring this outcome will likely be an aspect of our geo-political climate.

Finally, even though most individuals at the conference were relative strangers at the beginning, we became colleagues, advocates and associates with common missions and visions. We learned that language, country of origin, or even political backgrounds did not deter us from our basic premises of good service, equal rights, and enlightened futures for persons with intellectual disabilities. We learned much from each other, and we understood we all still have much to learn.
Adult Student Transition Education Program’s First Semester

August 2011, Minot State University was pleased to welcome three new students onto its campus; these students were the first accepted into a new program offered at MSU. The Adult Student Transition Education Program (A-STEP) is an educational initiative that provides transition and post-secondary programs for students with intellectual disabilities. The program, funded by a grant from the US Department of Education, is the first program of its kind in the state of North Dakota. A-STEP focuses on academic enrichment, socialization, career development, independence and self-determination.

A-STEP students participate in 6 credits of academic coursework from the undergraduate catalogs of Minot State University and Dakota College of Bottineau. Coursework is related to each student’s career goal. Current students are participating in Records Management, Acting, Broadcasting, Radio Production, Biology and Photography. Students career interests include sports broadcasting, biology, photography, office support, and grocery demonstration.

Socialization and community interactions are an important part of the A-STEP program. Students partake in all parts of college life including clubs and organizations, guest lectures, special events, theatrical productions, sporting events, and other recreational activities. A-STEP students recently attended homecoming week activities on MSU’s campus. These activities were caricature drawing, world’s fastest painter, a magic show, and the homecoming block party. Mentors and students also attended NOTSTOCK, which is MSU’s art and music festival, and socialized while eating lunch at one of the many campus dining locations.

Each week, students improve everyday life skills through a GPS (Goals + Plans = Success) life planning seminar that was adapted from the online curriculum, assessment options, and other resources at Century College in Minnesota. This seminar helps students set goals and design plans that will lead them to success in the future. Students are provided with hands-on experiences that support a generalization of skills to natural environments. GPS focuses on five content areas: career, education, finance, leadership and personal. This semester students reviewed the MSU handbook and became familiar with the MSU campus, set individual goals, reviewed and found their learning styles, discussed classroom etiquette in college, and discussed academic integrity.

A-STEP offers individual supports and services including social mentors, peer mentors, tutors and coaches. Mentors increase the amount of active engagement in social and academic as well as work settings. A-STEP peer mentors and social mentors are graduate or undergraduate students that have an interest in supporting other students to participate within the classroom and social activities on campus and in the community. Peer mentors are students who take the same classes as A-STEP students. At this time, A-STEP employs four peer mentors to support students in five different classroom settings. Peer mentors are enrolled in a wide range of academic programs including broadcasting, theatre and education. A-STEP social mentors provide interpersonal skills to their assigned student or students. A-STEP employs six social mentors. Their majors are biology, communication disorders, elementary education and education of intellectual disabilities.

Recruitment activities take place in the Souris Valley and Peace Garden Special Education Units. In the 2011-2012 academic year, A-STEP can support five students and will add ten additional students beginning August 2012. For more information please contact Janet Green project director at Janet.green@minotstateu.edu or 701-858-4473.
Collaborator

North Dakota APSE

By: Scott Burlingame, ND APSE Chapter President

I am excited to be the new chapter President of North Dakota APSE. In my “day” job, I am the Executive Director of Independence, Inc., a Resource Center for Independent Living in Minot. Our mission is to advocate for the freedom of choice for individuals with disabilities to live independently through the removal of all barriers. We serve people with all ages with all types of disabilities.

APSE is a growing national non-profit membership organization, founded in 1988 as the Association for Persons in Supported Employment, now known as APSE. The North Dakota chapter of APSE was formed in October of 1997. APSE is the only national organization with an exclusive focus on integrated employment and career advancement opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Why am I involved in APSE? We are currently presented with a once in lifetime opportunity to change the employment rates of people with disabilities. It is obvious that people with disabilities have historically, and continue to live in poverty at a higher rate than their non-disabled peers. Right now in North Dakota, we have more jobs than we have employees to fill them. In the towns in which Independence, Inc. has offices (Minot and Williston) we have almost zero unemployment.

The natural answer to me is that we must make better use of the human resources that are readily available in our communities. Now is the time to make the needed changes to polices, expectations, and attitudes to ensure that all people, regardless of disability, can achieve community-based employment at a competitive wage.

The movement towards this outcome is called “Employment First”. APSE defines Employment First as “Employment in the general workforce is the first and preferred outcome in the provision of publicly funded services for all working age citizens with disabilities, regardless of level of disability.”

How do we achieve that outcome in North Dakota? Honestly, I do not know the answer at this time. I do not even know if there is one answer. It will take the collaborative work of some dedicated people to change the current employment paradigm of people with disabilities. It will take the creativity of employers, educators, service providers, and people with disabilities themselves to make this happen. It will mean that people will have to step out of a comfort zone that people will have to take amazing risks.

On the wall in my office is a Margaret Mead quote that says, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” My hope is that the North Dakota APSE chapter can be that small group of thoughtful dedicated people that change the employment outcomes and significantly reduce the poverty level for people with disabilities.

If you would like to learn more about APSE, please visit www.apse.org or you can contact me at 701-839-4724 or scottb@independencecil.org.
Meet an Audiologist

By: Wendy Thomas

Jerrica Maxson, Au.D, practices as an audiologist at Trinity Hospital in Minot, ND. Jerrica has been actively involved in the North Dakota Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (ND EHDI) program. Her clinical interests include pediatric audiology, hearing aid fitting and management, and cochlear implant programming. As part of her doctoral work through the University of Iowa, she completed a 4th year externship at the Central Institute for the Deaf Oral School in St. Louis. She then practiced as a pediatric cochlear implant audiologist at St. Louis Children’s Hospital before returning to her hometown to join Trinity Health. Jerrica serves as an Advisory Committee member for ND EHDI and is a Board Member for the North Dakota Chapter for Hands and Voices.

New Associate Director of Development

NDCPD would like to welcome our new Associate Director of Development Lori Garnes! We asked Lori to write a few words about herself:

I am Lori Garnes and I am excited to be back at NDCPD after an almost eight year absence. Most people don’t know, but I was born in California. At the age of three my family moved back to Ohio where I grew up. I consider my hometown, Brooklyn, Ohio, a suburb of Cleveland. I was a city girl all my life until I moved to Minot. Wow, did I have culture shock! But after 26 years in North Dakota, I feel right at home here.

I am a special education teacher by training, and worked with adults with DD for eight years at MVAW. In 1996, after getting my Masters in Special Education here at MSU, I started working for NDCPD. My early projects were ND-WAN, IPCM and RSES (pronounced “Reese’s”). As you can see, NDCPD acronyms have only gotten better over the years. I took a special education faculty position in 2000, which prompted me to get my Ph.D. from Utah State University. Since then I have been faculty and then chair in the special education department. When the Associate Director of Development position opened up, I jumped on the opportunity to come join you all at NDCPD. It really has always been a “swell” place to work!
Recently Funded Projects

Self Advocacy through Technology
Principal Investigator: Emily Rodacker
Funding Agency: ND Dept. of HS, SCDD
Total Funding Per Year: $33,462
This project assists individuals with intellectual disabilities gain better access to and use of mainstream technology.

The Perceptions Project
Principal Investigator: Steve Peterson
Funding Agency: ND Dept. of HS, SCDD
Total Funding Per Year: $42,098
The Perceptions Project works towards combating the issue of negative public attitudes towards individuals with developmental disabilities by developing sustainable practices and activities which will deliver positive educational communication.

CSTP Accreditation Project
Principal Investigator: Mary Mercer
Funding Agency: ND Dept. of HS, SCDD
Total Funding Per Year: $34,940
This project is designed to implement a key intervention strategy to address staff recruitment and retention challenges of direct support and other professionals needed to support people with developmental disabilities.

Support Autism in North Dakota (SAND)
Principal Investigator: Garnes, Lori
Funding Agency: US Dept. of HHS, MCHB
Total Funding Per Year: $292,798
The SAND project will implement the strategies outlined in the ND ASD Task Force Strategic Plan by collaborating with relevant stakeholders.

Upcoming Training

Jumping Off the Not-So-Merry-Go-Round:
Staff and Clinicians Building Therapeutic Challenging Behaviors by Dr. Eric Frank
November 3, 2011 Bismarck Comfort Inn
November 4, 2011 Development Homes, Inc. Grand Forks
Time: 9:00am—3:30pm
Fee: $85.00

Sexuality Education for Individuals with Cognitive Disabilities Webinar
By: Terri Couwenhoven
Tuesday, December 6, 2011
Time: 1:00pm—3:00pm Central Time
Fee: $30 per site
To sign up email or call: Stacey Johnston or Courtney Rockvoy
(800) 233-1737
stacey.johnston@minotstateu.edu
courtney.rockvoy@minotstateu.edu

The Ram Good Job Award is given to a staff member each month to recognize them for doing such a “ram good job.” This award is given by the preceding month’s award recipient, and honors the staff member’s work to enhance the lives of people with disabilities and further the center mission. Winners over the past months include:

September 2011, Emily Rodacker - Project Coordinator for ND EHDI and Medical Home Certification
October 2011, Megan Laudenschlager - Project Coordinator
**New Staff**

**Jane Wiedewitsch**, is a consumer housing resource specialist with Money Follows the Person. She is located in the Fargo quadrant. Jane previously worked for the Fargo Housing and Redevelopment Authority. She has a bachelor’s degree from North Dakota State University. Jane enjoys reading and baking.

**Karen Pearson**, is Money Follows the Person’s consumer housing resource Specialist, located in the Bismarck quadrant. She was previously employed by North Dakota Protection and Advocacy in Bismarck. Karen attended UND and Bemidji State University, Minn. In college she was elected to Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society. She has three daughters and two granddaughters. In her spare time Karen enjoys reading and needlework.

**Courtney Rockvoy**, works as an administrative assistant for NDCPD. She currently works on the GPIC, GPAST, SAAT Prairie Mental Health Perceptions, Webcasts and PreService projects. Courtney graduated from Minot State with her bachelors in arts in Psychology along with a minor in Criminal Justice and concentration in Special Education. Courtney likes to spend time with friends and family, camp, fish and scrapbook.

**Ashley Dhuyvetter**, works as an administrative assistant for NDCPD. She works on the ND EDHI, EDHI IS, SMP and CAC projects. She graduated from North Dakota State University in 2010 with a B.S. in Marketing and a B.S. in Management. She previously worked in special education at Minot Public Schools and at the business office at Trinity Hospital. Ashley enjoys spending time with friends and family, traveling, running, skating, going to the lake and watching as much hockey as possible.

**Shanna Hanson**, is a consumer housing resource specialist with Money Follows the Person, located in the Grand Forks quadrant. She graduated from North Dakota State University. Shanna married her high school sweetheart, and has three kids. She enjoys spending time at her lake house in the summer, watching her children participate in school events, reading and hanging out with her friends.
The Collaborator

The Collaborator is the quarterly newsletter for the North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities (NDCPD). NDCPD is a University of Excellence on Developmental Disabilities in Education, Research, and Services at Minot State University. It is part of a network of similar programs at universities throughout the United States.

Our mission...
To provide leadership and innovation that advances the state-of-the-art and empower people with disabilities to challenge expectations, achieve personal goals and be included in all aspects of community life.

Vision Statement...
We believe that people with disabilities have the same rights as all citizens. We believe that people with disabilities who receive publicly funded services have the right to expect that those services appropriately promote their independence, productivity, integration and inclusion. Furthermore, we believe that the public expects that these services will be provided in an effective manner.

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