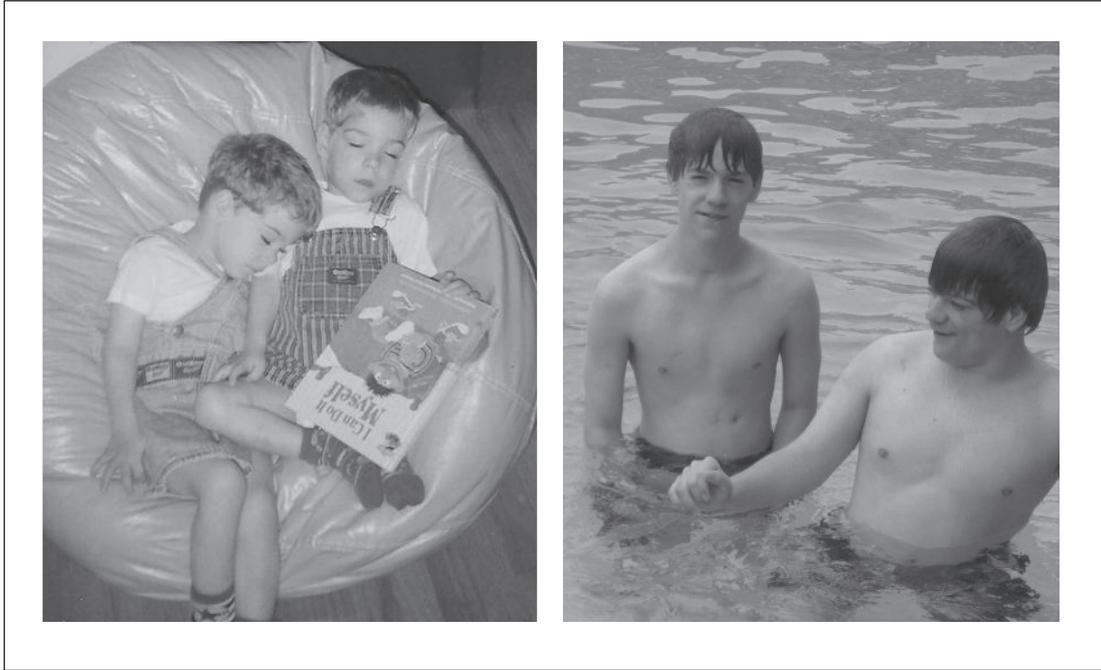


BREAKING GROUND



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THE TENNESSEE FAMILY SUPPORT ALLIANCE is a grassroots organization comprised of citizens who care about the Tennessee Family Support Program, and who support it as a necessary component of Tennessee's service array for families who have loved ones with disabilities. We maintain a list of individuals who have volunteered to serve as representatives of various groups.

Membership in the Tennessee Family Support Alliance is open to everyone. The purpose is to voice endorsement of one of Tennessee's most valued and effective statewide programs serving persons of all ages with a variety of severe disabilities, and providing essential support to their families and caregivers.

We applaud and thank Governor Bredesen for including continued funding for the Family Support Program in his budget for the next two fiscal years. We also thank all the families, individuals and

legislators who have spoken and acted on behalf of this important program.

We actively solicit comments and discussion from the general public, as well as communications from individuals and families who use the program.

Visit www.tnfamilysupport.org for more information or to contact the Alliance.

CONTACT INFORMATION



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E-MAIL: breakingground@vanderbilt.edu.

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CHOOSING THEIR OWN PATHS BY DIRECTING THEIR OWN IEP MEETINGS: SYLER AND SYDNEY'S STORY

BY TREVA MAITLAND

How well I remember

the days prior to our twin boys' IEP (Individualized Education Plan) meeting, when anxiety and fear monsters gnawed away at my brain cells as they prepared to enter Kindergarten at Spring Hill School in Gibson County in Northwest Tennessee. Syler and Sydney were really excited about starting school with their friends and neighbors, but my husband and I were terrified. Both boys were still medically fragile due to their premature birth, and they were incredibly small for their age. Would they be safe from bullying? Would they be educated in inclusive classrooms with services and supports that would empower them to be successful adults? Would they be accepted and welcomed by their classmates and teachers? Would I have a nervous breakdown before the meeting started?

The meeting came and went. The boys' IEPs were well written and implemented with only a few glitches, and the school year progressed. Two weeks before the end of that year, Syler got off the bus with his hand on his hip and attitude smeared on his face. He said, "You have to do something with Sydney. He keeps peeing on the bathroom wall." I was shocked and appalled because both boys have the ability to control their behavior better than that. Such behavior would not be acceptable in our house, nor would it be acceptable at school.

Needless to say, I called an IEP meeting to address behavior issues. I invited the boys to the meeting because I wanted them see that the school and I would be working together as a team...their team. Although the school was reluctant, the boys participated in their own IEP meetings at the age of six. I had no misconceptions that we had "Super Self-Advocates" on our hands, but I expected full participation. Anyway, I tried to be professional as I asked Sydney if he had been "urinating on the bathroom wall," but his response was "HUH!?" So, I asked, "Have you been peeing on the bathroom wall at school?" He dropped his head and answered, "Yes." The mother in

me lost all professionalism and asked, "What were you thinking?" To which he responded, "I was trying to write in cursive." After the boys returned to class, the whole IEP team laughed because, first, it was funny, and, second, we knew cursive writing was a 2nd grade skill, providing us with hope that this was a sign of great potential within our boys. Potential for more than "cursive urination" we hoped, but we didn't know exactly what. The best news is that Syler and Sydney participated in their own IEP meetings from that day forward.

Many times over the years, we have asked, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Of course, the boys' aspirations have changed from NBA basketball player and ASPCA officer to an electrical engineer and taxidermist. We don't know if those choices will be their lifelong careers, but we do know that it is their choice and not ours. It is our responsibility, as family members and educators, to facilitate a smooth transition to adulthood with goals for higher education, employment and independent living by implementing "a coordinated set of activities for each student that is designed to be within a results-oriented process that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities", according to IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act).

Accordingly, we had tracked the boys' strengths, preferences and interests over the years and felt ready for that big transition to the high school IEP meetings a couple of years ago. Sydney's meeting was first. We discussed his strengths, present levels of academic performance based on current age-appropriate assessments, wrote measurable goals, including those for transition, and provided him with a list of courses for high school. He chose his classes with help from the guidance counselor and Special Education teacher and asked me if I liked what he chose. I was very pleased. Next, it was Syler's turn. We went through the same process with him, but Syler chose classes that I would not have chosen for him. He is

his father's child, you know.

Anyway, I donned my invisible cheerleading gear and tried to advocate for him to choose more appropriate courses of study, like Culinary Arts where he could learn to cook independently. He said, "No, thank you" and went back to reading his IEP. I tried again and again. He listened intently for a moment and then held up his hand like a stop sign and said, "Mom, you have always said I could make my own choices in life, and I'm making them. Please back off, and thank you." I wanted to scream! The entire team giggled under their breath. I was not amused, but I relented and signed HIS IEP. It dawned on me later that both boys had been good Self-Advocates and had effectively participated in their own IEP meetings. What a wonderful day!

It wasn't until I was introduced to Dr. Jim Martin's Self-Directed IEP program that I realized there is assistance available to teach students to direct their own IEP meetings. My boys and I could have used such guidance a few years ago, but we tend to take life as it comes, believing that learning is a lifelong process and that we should share what we learn with others. Special thanks to Dr. Martin for sharing his Self-Directed IEP program with us! Here are the 11 steps necessary for students to lead their own IEP meetings:

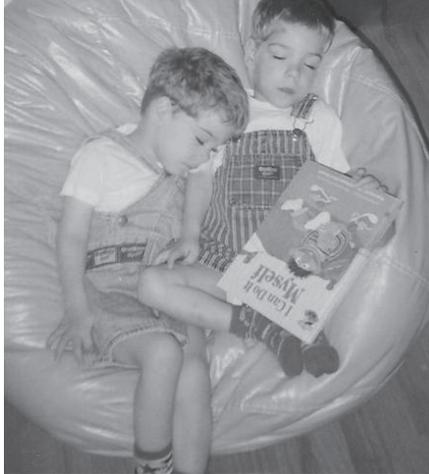
1. Begin meeting by stating purpose.
2. Introduce everyone.
3. Review past goals and performance.
4. Ask for others' feedback.
5. State your school & transition goals.
6. Ask questions.
7. Deal with differences of opinion.
8. State the support you'll need.
9. Summarize your goals.
10. Close meeting.
11. Work on IEP goals all year.

Long story short, Dr. Martin has given The Arc of Tennessee permission to use his program and training modules to provide Self-Directed IEP training through a project funded by the Tennessee Department of Education, Division

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4 →

← CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3 of Special Education. Self-Directed IEPs are evidence based, will support meeting Indicator 13, and relate directly to the NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English) standard for Communication Skills, etc. Although the boys have made mistakes by way of some bad choices, we must remember no one is without a few skinned knees whether they have a disability or not. That's just a part of the Dignity of Risk. Sydney and Syler continue to practice Self-Determination and Self-Advocacy skills, make improvements in their overall skills, and will be leading their own IEP meeting the next time we meet.

Remember, we are better together, and the students reap the benefits of effective family/educator collaborations. Syler and Sydney surely have, and our hope is that they will continue to hold tightly to the "We Can Do It"



mantra they embraced as toddlers in their bean bag chair!

Self-Directed IEP training is available for students, families and educators across the State of Tennessee. For more information contact The Arc of Tennessee at 615-248-5878 or 800-835-7077,



Photos Courtesy of Treva Maitland

visit <http://www.thearcctn.org/Transitions.php>, or e-mail tmaitland@thearcctn.org.

Treva Maitland is the proud parent of Syler & Sydney and graduate of Tennessee Partners in Policymaking™ Leadership Institute (1998-99). She serves as a secondary transition specialist for The Arc of Tennessee.

NATIONAL RESOURCES: EDUCATION

COMPILED BY COURTNEY TAYLOR

In addition to the following national resources, **Tennessee Disability Pathfinder's** Disability Resources Library contains a number of educational resources that are helpful. To view these and other relevant listings, visit www.familypathfinder.org. Click on the icon "Disability Resources Library" and scroll down the page to the section on "Education."

WEB SITES

The **Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD)** is actively involved in all facets of promoting full and equal participation by individuals with disabilities in higher education; and supporting the systems, institutions, professions and professionals who attend to the fulfillment of this important mission. www.ahead.org

Disability.gov includes a section that provides information about a variety of topics from early childhood education to post-college and beyond, including making the transition from high school to postsecondary education or work, laws that protect the rights of students with disabilities, classroom supports and accommodations, and scholarships and other forms of financial aid. www.disability.gov/education

Going To College contains information on college life for students with disabilities. It is designed for high school students and provides video clips, activities and additional resources to help them get a head start in planning for college. www.going-to-college.org

The **National Center on Secondary Education and Transition** coordinates national resources, offers technical assistance and disseminates information related to secondary education and transition for youth with disabilities in order to create opportunities for youth to achieve successful futures. www.ncset.org

ARTICLES

IMPACT: FEATURE ISSUE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

In this issue of *Impact*, parents share their experiences with early childhood inclusion, researchers and practitioners discuss strategies for supporting quality early education experiences for young children with disabilities, and innovative inclusive early childhood programs from around the country describe their strategies and outcomes. <http://ici.umn.edu/products/impact/221/default.html>

OVERVIEW OF THE FEDERAL HIGHER EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES ACT REAUTHORIZATION

The Consortium for Postsecondary Education for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities has developed this Policy Brief to educate the public on the reauthorization of the Federal Higher Education Opportunities Act. www.thinkcollege.net/publications

POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

This article appeared in the June 2009 issue of the *Journal of Disability Policy Studies* in reference to increased participation of individuals with disabilities in postsecondary educational settings. It provides an overview of related policies, including accommodations, considerations and services. <http://dps.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/20/1/35>

BOOK

Grigal, Meg & Hart, Debra. (2009). *Think College: Postsecondary Education Options for Students with Intellectual Disabilities*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H Brookes Pub Company.

Courtney Taylor is associate director of Communications and dissemination at the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center.

PREPARING EARLY FOR THE FUTURE

BY RUTH WOODALL



In so many varied ways, we are the products of our parents.

I was born in 1953, the fourth child to a farmer in West Tennessee. When I was just three years old, my father was paralyzed from the knees down and was told he would never walk again. I watched as he struggled to overcome his disability, learned to walk, and led us to become one of the largest farming families in West Tennessee by the time I was 18 years old. My father also lived his life as a diabetic.

At a young age, I watched a physical therapist help my father learn to use his legs and I dreamed early of being just like her. One thing I knew: I needed a college education to be a physical therapist. I also knew that the students who made the highest grades in school received scholarships to go to college, and that was the only way I could afford an education. So I did what many students do today; I took easy courses to ensure that my grade point average would be high enough for me to get an academic scholarship. I did not prepare for the rigor of college by taking challenging courses and, as a result, college was a struggle.

My lack of preparation for college and a career as a physical therapist ended when I did not have high enough grades to make it into medical school. So I completed my degree in chemistry and, at the advice of my college advisor, became a high school chemistry teacher. My love for teaching, for chemistry and for students created a perfect combination for a successful career for me. My first classroom lecture of each school year was the same. I would tell my students my story and end it with, "Don't do as I did, do as I say. Prepare early for the future."

In 2002, my teaching career ended when I was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. The disease had advanced to the stage that my doctor advised me to retire from the classroom and consider other options. After a year of recuperation, the Tennessee Chamber of Commerce & Industry recruited me, with my disability, to start the Tennessee Scholars Initiative. This was an exciting opportunity for me because I could work again helping students achieve their dreams. I could use my background in education, and my experience and skills to recruit

business leaders to support this fantastic program.

Tennessee Scholars is a business-led program that uses rewards and incentives to motivate students to stretch themselves academically while adhering to a set of additional expectations of attendance, discipline and community service so they will graduate better prepared for postsecondary education, the workforce or the military. The program is endorsed by the Governor and the State Department of Education but is supported by public and private funds. It is managed by business-led organizations and implemented by volunteers in each local school district.

In just five years, the program is now active in more than 65 percent of the school districts across the State. More than 15,000 high school students have graduated as Tennessee Scholars. These students—who come from all races, economic status, disability and religions—share one thing upon graduation: they are better prepared for life, for the workforce and for the future.

Tennessee Scholars teaches students that employers are looking for people who are creative and who want to succeed. They want employees who are reliable, committed, honest and team players. A disability does not have to be a barrier. Each of us has some kind of disability; it is up to us to meet the challenge and overcome it. My disability has only made me stronger and more determined to be a better person.

We are products of our parents and our childhood. We also are products of our educational experience. Tennessee Scholars gives every student the opportunity to do better and be better.

Thank you to the Tennessee Chamber of Commerce & Industry for its practice of hiring and supporting employees with disabilities. Also, thank you to the local chambers of commerce in Tennessee that are supporting the Tennessee Scholars efforts through volunteerism and funding.

For information about Tennessee Scholars, call Ruth Woodall at 615-256-5141 or 615-256-6726; or at ruth.woodall@tnchamber.org. Visit the Web site at www.tennesseescholars.org/Content/default.asp.

Ruth Woodall is director of Tennessee Scholars.

TENNESSEE DISABILITY MEGAConference

The 8th Annual Tennessee Disability Megaconference will take place June 3 & 4 at the Nashville Airport Marriott.

SAVE THE DATE: JUNE 3 & 4

For more information including conference registration, exhibits and stipends can be found at www.tndisabilitymegaconference.org, or by calling The Arc of Tennessee at 615.248.5878, or 800.835.7077.



I PROVED THEM WRONG!

BY CHRIS DENNIS

My teachers in elementary school would call me stupid, dumb, slow, undisciplined and a loser. I have ADHD [Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder] and some learning disabilities. My mom says she knew I was different the moment I was born, but I didn't get a "label" or diagnosis until I was in second grade. A pediatric neurologist diagnosed my condition then and I started taking medication.

I always had trouble in school. My kindergarten teacher called my mom and told her she thought I was deaf. My mom had already had my hearing tested before kindergarten and knew I wasn't. My first grade teacher sent me to the principal's office every day, so I didn't learn to read. I was suspended from the first grade for refusing to stay in my seat. The principal met my mom at the front door when she came to pick me up and told her not to bring me back to his school again. We moved over the weekend so I could legally attend another school in a different school system.

When we changed schools, I learned to read by second grade. My third grade teacher put headphones on my head not connected to anything. She thought this would keep me focused. In fifth grade, my teacher placed my desk in the coatroom. She thought that was where children with ADHD should sit. After that we moved to a different county.

I was in a sixth grade classroom with resource help. My sixth grade teacher told my mom he didn't go to college to have a kid like me in his classroom.

Then my school made up a new classroom over Christmas break. I was placed in a self-contained classroom with about 12 kids, mostly boys, all with ADHD. My teacher was great because he told me he had ADHD too. I did great in his classroom.

By high school, my teachers and guidance counselor told me I would never be able to pass the math competency exam and would have to graduate with a special education diploma and forget college. That really made me and my mom mad. I took the math test twice and needed a 70 to pass; I made a 72.

I take Ritalin. It works for me. With a little support at school, help at home with homework and Ritalin, I did graduate with a high school diploma and a good grade point average. This allowed me to go to college. I went to Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) because it was close by my home. I failed every class I took in my freshman year. The campus was so large and it was hard to find my class or even a parking space.

ADHD is not something that just affects me in the classroom. You have to be organized to get up in time for class, find the parking space, get to class, and have the right books and assignments with you. At MTSU, the classes were too large and I could never get up to the teacher to ask questions one-on-one.

So after that terrible year, I tried Motlow State Community College. I did much better, but they required that I take Algebra and math is my learning disability. Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VR) was providing some financial help for tuition at this time, and they knew I had a severe math disability. But when I failed the Algebra class, even with tutoring help, VR dropped me. I made good grades in all my other classes, but that didn't matter.

I then left college and worked some odd jobs, trying to figure out what I should do next. I decided I wanted to be a photographer, so I looked at different art/photography schools in the area. The great thing about art school is they don't make you take Algebra! I do have to take one semester of general math, and I plan to get a tutor just in case. I am at Nossi College of Art in Goodlettsville working on a Bachelor's degree. I am in my second semester and doing great.

I like art school because classes are one day a week for four hours with breaks. That gives me seven days to complete an assignment before the next class. I have to break down big assignments into smaller steps, because I can easily get overwhelmed. I use outlines and note cards a lot. I have a folder for each class rather than putting everything into one folder. I do recognize I have a lot of trouble speaking in front of the class and I am uncomfortable when people are looking directly at me. I have to work on this.

If I had advice for other students like me, I would say: 1) sit close to the teacher so you can hear and see everything; 2) ask the teacher questions, don't hold back; 3) answer questions and actively participate, it keeps you interested; 4) schedule your classes for the time of day you are at your best; and 5) take classes from teachers who let you work hands-on rather than just lecture. I discovered I do best with teachers who walk around the room rather than just remain stuck at the front.

It has taken me some time to figure out what I wanted to do with my life and how to get it, but I know I am on the right track now. I want to work for a magazine like *National Geographic*, travel and take photographs. I like the idea of working for myself. If I need to hire an accountant or secretary to keep me on track—well, lots of people do that.

I would like to have the chance to tell all my old teachers I can do it, and that I proved them wrong.

Chris Dennis is a 2004 Youth Leadership Forum graduate who lives in Smyrna.



Photos by Chris Dennis

A DISASTER PLAN FOR YOUR CHILD'S IEP

“Fail to plan, plan to fail.” – Carl W. Buechner

BY JULIE GALLUP

In Tennessee, we have the risk of many types of disaster, both natural and man made. Our State has been recognized for her efforts in disaster planning and preparedness and there are many resources available to help families and individuals with disabilities to prepare for disaster. Most of the resources assume that a disaster takes place while a family is at home, but what if your child is at school? What are the plans for the safety of students with disabilities?

While the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) does not require formal emergency plans, Titles I and III require that policies and procedures of accommodations include individuals with disabilities. This would include schools making the development of an ADA Individualized Evacuation Plan an important part of your child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Schools are required by the Tennessee Department of Education to have a disaster plan that includes students and staff with disabilities. A basic understanding of policies and procedures will provide the foundation for any additional accommodations needed to ensure your child's safety.

Who might need additional help during a crisis? Individuals with mobility issues, visual disabilities, hearing disabilities, developmental disabilities, intellectual disabilities or a mental health diagnosis, as well as people with respiratory conditions, seizures and other medical conditions.

An individualized disaster plan should include student information, the student's schedule and room assignments, assignment of primary and secondary staff responsible for the implementation of the plan, revision date(s) and the location of any equipment needed to ensure the student's safety.

Here are some examples of accommodations that could be included as a part of your child's plan, depending on the nature of his or her disability.

GENERAL ACCOMMODATIONS

- Request voice announcement over the public address system to prevent behavior triggered by loud noises.
- Safety drill education and practice of fire drills before actual fire drill takes place.
- Use of wallet cards to provide first responders with vital information.

MOBILITY DISABILITY

- If a student can be removed from or needs assistance to get into

his/her wheelchair during a drill or emergency, staff should be trained for transfers when appropriate.

- Develop protocol for students using wheelchairs during actual fire to protect from smoke inhalation.
- If using a power chair, train staff on how to disengage chair for manual use.
- During an earthquake, move students to an inside wall or under a doorway and cover and protect their heads as much as possible.
- If evacuation is not possible and an individual goes to a designated area to wait for assistance, designate who will inform first responders to that individual's whereabouts.

VISUAL DISABILITY

- Need for alternative forms of communication for students with visual impairments.
- Development of Braille signage to show evacuation routes, if needed.
- Use a buddy system (with backup buddy). This may need to be assigned in different classes or settings.

HEARING DISABILITY

- Develop an alternative form of communication for students who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Use of pictures cards/schedules for safety drills and actual emergencies.
- If students/staff use American Sign Language (ASL), individuals should know basic ASL to communicate disaster-related information and instructions.

DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES, INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES AND MENTAL HEALTH DIAGNOSIS

- Provide non-stimulating environment for drills.
- Practice drill outside of the regular school day.
- Allow child to utilize comfort item to reduce likelihood of disability-related behavior.
- Use of pictures cards/schedules for safety drills and actual emergencies.

RESPIRATORY CONDITIONS

- Provide masks or towels in each classroom.
- Allow child to have life-saving medication easily accessible during an emergency.
- Teach child/staff about alternative ways to protect airways.

SEIZURES

- If drill/actual emergency protocol uses a loud alarm and flashing lights, students with epilepsy/seizures may need to cover one eye and look away from the lights to prevent a seizure.

This list is by no means exhaustive, but is intended to be a starting point for a conversation with your child's school staff during planning for your child's IEP and development of an individualized evacuation plan. Parents and caregivers also should discuss disaster plans with their children in order to better prepare them should a disaster occur.

Working together as a team will create a safer school environment during a crisis.

When planning is successful, it is a plan to succeed!

If your group or organization would like to schedule a training on disaster planning in schools, please contact Julie Gallup at 615-298-1080.

Julie Gallup is the traumatic brain injury and assistive technology advocate for the Disability Law & Advocacy Center in Nashville.

A THANK YOU NOTE TO FAMILY SUPPORT

BY LESLIE HARTMAN

When most

people think of the word "Summer", their mind automatically drifts back to a defining memory in their life that made their Summer, maybe even their entire life. For me, Summer is defined in three words: Easter Seals Camp.

Easter Seals Camp was the one place that I did not feel like I was out of place when I was growing up. At camp, I was not the only one with a walker (and sometimes a wheelchair), unlike my other activities. Easter Seals Camp was the only camp my family looked into that did not turn me away due to my disability, or required me to meet certain criteria in order to attend.

Easter Seals provides camps and respite throughout the year for people with intellectual and physical disabilities. Campers get a chance to participate in activities like any typical camper. At Easter Seals Camp, your disability is not something that holds you back, it's something that *enhances* you, because of the plethora of opportunities that are adapted to

your disability.

One of my favorite activities at camp was getting to shoot a bow-and-arrow. Having limited use in my hands, I was able to shoot a bow-and-arrow with literally just a push of a button. You cannot put a price tag on those types of experiences.

Like most things in life, camps cost money. Lots of money. Money that was usually not there. Despite not having the money, my parents made sure that, no matter what, I attended camp.

It was not until about four years ago that I found out where the money for camp came from. While out with my father one day, he took me to an old building. I was slightly puzzled as to why we were there. My father informed me that the building held the office of The Arc of Davidson County.

I then learned that over the last few years the Tennessee Family Support Program, locally administered by The Arc of Davidson County, was the reason I had been able to attend

Easter Seals Camp. Often, those Family Support dollars were the only reason I was able to attend.

As I entered this old building, with this new tidbit of information rolling over and over in my head, the gravity of what Family Support did, and does, hit me. If Family Support did not exist, I would not be able to do this thing which I love so much.

With every step, my gratitude for the service that The Arc and Family Support provided grew until my heart was overflowing. When I met the gentleman who had helped me, I immediately told him, "Thank you."

While I no longer attend Easter Seals Camp, The Arc and Family Support still provide financial support for me and my family. Without that support, my family would have an even harder time staying together and making ends meet.

Leslie Hartman is a student at Lee University in Cleveland, Tennessee, and an intern with the Council on Developmental Disabilities.



Photos Courtesy of PENCIL Foundation

PENCIL PARTNERS LEARN SKILLS WHILE HELPING OTHER STUDENTS SUCCEED

BY NIKKI TROUTMAN

Each week, a few very special students are getting real-life experience through a unique partnership. They are not only learning invaluable workplace skills, they are giving back to their community. They are learning the ins-and-outs of a nonprofit organization. They also are helping disadvantaged students in Metro Nashville Public Schools get the school supplies they need.

In 2005, in collaboration with The LP Foundation, the charitable arm of LP Building Products, PENCIL Foundation launched LP PENCIL Box, a program that allows Metro teachers to shop for free school supplies in order that disadvantaged students get the learning tools they need to succeed in the classroom. The program started by serving elementary schools. The idea took off quickly, donations poured in and, over time, it became clear that more space was needed. LP PENCIL Box tripled its size and expanded to serve teachers in Pre-K through 12. With the expansion, however, the workload increased heavily for the one paid staff member. The need for volunteers to help operate the store was critical to its continuing success.

When the Hillsboro High School Lifeskills teacher, Coach Myers, took his free shopping trip, he approached PENCIL with the idea of having his students volunteer at the store. The idea was mutually beneficial—the program manager would have regular volunteers and the students



would have hands-on experience and learn critical workplace skills. The students, as part of their curriculum, started working at LP PENCIL Box in 2008 and have been a tremendous help. Twice each week, a group of 10-12 students and 2-4 teachers help for two hours with various tasks, such as taking inventory, bundling merchandise, stocking the shelves, cleaning and organizing.

Since the beginning of the partnership between LP PENCIL Box and Hillsboro High School, the students have volunteered more than 1,600 hours and currently account for over 25 percent of the program's total volunteer base.

One of the students, 18-year-old Art Prince, has volunteered for more than a year and his contributions have been extraordinary. As an experienced volunteer, Mr. Prince takes it upon himself to help the other students when they need assistance. He makes sure the work gets done and is the "go to person" when special tasks need to be completed. "I like coming to the LP PENCIL Box," Mr. Prince said. "This

INVITING YOU TO CONTRIBUTE TO OUR SPECIAL ANNUAL ISSUE OF **BREAKING GROUND** DEVOTED TO THE ARTS

Do you write short stories or poetry?

Do you paint, draw or take pictures?

Then we'd like to see your work for possible publication!

The editor will consider:

- Fiction, up to 1,000 words, and poems, whether traditional or modern.
- Photos and all other forms of artwork.

We'll give contributors a prominent by-line, a biographical note and copies of the issue.

Please include your name, complete contact information and a two- or three-sentence biography with your submission.

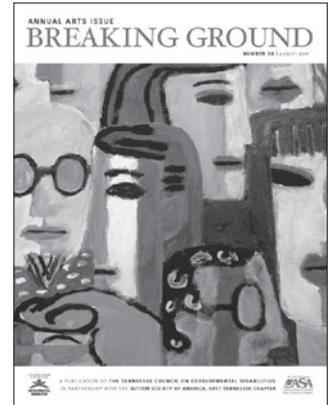
ALL ENTRIES MUST BE SUBMITTED BY JUNE 15, 2010

Content is devoted to materials by or about persons with disabilities.

Send your submissions to:

Ned Andrew Solomon
Managing Editor, *Breaking Ground*
Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities
Parkway Towers, Suite 130
404 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0228
ned.solomon@tn.gov

Questions? Call 615-532-6556



is my second year and I'm happy to be back. I hope this will help me to find a job after I graduate."

Coach Myers described his students' experience like this: "The students love to come to the LP PENCIL Box. Each week they look forward to working and they developed a real ownership for their work. When we come in the morning after a busy teacher shopping day, they say, 'What have they done to OUR store? We need to make it look good again!'

"By now they know the routine and take pride in the way they help the teachers and other students. I am very grateful to have this wonderful place for my students and appreciate the opportunity to work here."

When word spread about the partnership, other high schools wanted to take part. McGavock High School jumped on board and their students are enjoying their experience as well.

The commitment and dedication of the Hillsboro students prompted

PENCIL to nominate them for the 2009 Mary Catherine Strobel Volunteer Award. The students were named finalists and received recognition at the awards luncheon. Several students have graduated and found jobs at Kroger Stores because of their experience at LP PENCIL Box.

To date, LP PENCIL Box has distributed more than \$1 million worth of school supplies to Metro students and the Hillsboro students have been a major contributor to reaching this milestone.

"These students have been an invaluable resource to LP PENCIL Box and the great thing is that it's a true partnership," said Ulli Heregger, LP PENCIL Box program manager. "They are learning time management skills, how to follow directions and how to work as a team. We truly thank them for their hard work."

Nikki Troutman is communications manager for the PENCIL Foundation in Nashville.

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GETTING AND MAINTAINING A JOB

BY SARA EZELL

For the past four years, I've had the pleasure of overseeing Project Opportunity, a job training program housed at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. From July through May, we train high school students with developmental disabilities, ages 18-22, to become qualified applicants for open positions at Vanderbilt. As of this writing, we have 18 graduates from the training program successfully employed in full- or part-time positions! I have learned a great deal over these years, most importantly that although getting a job is a big transition, the process of MAINTAINING the job can prove to be the most challenging part. That is, finding a job is not the end...it is just the beginning.

When we began this program, our model program in Cincinnati, Ohio, Project Search, told us that providing "follow along" services would be the foundation of our success. However, funding for this is often not supported under the current social service model. Few job placement agencies/services will continue funding for follow along past 90 days of employment. But my concern is this: what if the individual suddenly needs support on day 92? Maintaining a job is a lifelong issue, especially for individuals with disabilities, whose needs may fluctuate from time to time. In addition, if we are committed to placing people into jobs which fill a business need (which is the cornerstone of Project Opportunity), we need to provide ongoing support to the employer as well.

Meet Charlotte. She is a delightful, hard working 20-year-old who happens to have a developmental disability that makes it difficult for her to find and maintain a job. She is not a strong reader but is an excellent auditory learner and can utilize photos or picture lists to perform tasks. Charlotte can handle a job with multiple steps, as long as they are systematic and predictable. Charlotte enrolls in Project Opportunity to receive some experience in several different areas of the Hospital, though she says she just wants to be a singer as her occupation. We discuss with Charlotte and her parents the idea of



realistic career goals and about the difference between "jobs" and "hobbies". Her parents find it difficult to "discourage" Charlotte from her singing, but agree to support Charlotte in Project Opportunity and other career possibilities that can make the money she needs to enjoy her hobby.

During her months at Project Opportunity, Charlotte's internship is stocking medical supplies on a nursing unit. She has a picture-coded list that helps her complete this systematic process and she excels at the

task. As a result of her hard work, Charlotte is offered a job. The Project Opportunity staff support her through the interview process, during which Charlotte and her family agree that she is available to work any shift and are excited about the opportunity.

After accepting the final job offer, Charlotte's family is told that the hours are 4 pm-10 pm, Monday through Friday and every other Saturday. Charlotte's mom calls after the first day and says that the hours are not going to work. She goes on to say that Charlotte visits her Grandma every Saturday morning. At Project Opportunity we preach (did I mention we are often called "boot camp"?) that the Hospital is a 24/7 operation, thus work hours may not be 9 to 5...in fact, they probably will not be. If Charlotte wants a REAL job, she will have to make some sacrifices, as will her family.

Currently, we have another employee, Seth, who works 11 pm-3:30 am. His family had to do a MAJOR transition in their routine but are committed to Seth's ongoing success and simply made it work. In Charlotte's case, her parents are expected to make it work and Grandma learned that seeing Charlotte on Sunday afternoons worked just as well.

Now that Charlotte has her schedule settled, let's look in on her nearly 90 days later. So far, the transition into her job has been smooth. At her 90-day mark, she has officially completed her probationary period, per Vanderbilt policy. She meets with her supervisor, accompanied by a Project Opportunity staff member. During this meeting, Charlotte's supervisor tells her that she is doing an excellent job. The supervisor also explains that the Hospital will be ordering supplies from a different distributor, so the packaging and names of the supplies may look different.

This is a red flag for Project Opportunity and requires an increase in the follow along services for a short period of time. New picture lists need to be developed that show the new packaging and names, and Charlotte may need some extra training to

EMPOWERING STUDENTS AND FAMILIES WITH INFORMATION

BY KAREN HARRISON

Transition is a nebulous term that is always changing. But one thing remains constant: the need for accurate and up-to-date information. STEP (Support and Training for Exceptional Parents) meets this need in multiple ways. Information packets covering numerous transition topics are available. These packets are meant to be a first step in the process. Families almost always call seeking more information on direct strategies to apply in their particular situation.

We offer training workshops tailored to the specific needs of the sponsoring group. At a recent training, the focus was on preparing for and then navigating the adult service delivery system. Others may be looking at the early planning steps in transition and request the "Outcome Oriented Transition Plans" training.

STEP has expanded our trainings to include a targeted training called "Age Appropriate Transition Assessments". Individualizing the transition assessment leads to valid starting points and can quickly reveal holes in the planning process that need to be addressed.

Traditional evaluations don't provide an opportunity for families, students and school personnel to see the perspective that each brings to transition planning. To address this need, STEP developed a visual planning tool called "STEP's to Dreambuilding". Using a set of laminated cards representing a variety of post-school outcomes, students, families and teachers are able to identify what is most important to them in the transition process and then have an open discussion about the similarities and differences that emerge.

At a recent conference, the comments from students, teachers and families were very positive about our new tool. One parent was very surprised by the things her daughter chose as most important, thinking she would choose things like "have a boyfriend", "having money" and "going out to eat". Instead, the young lady chose "understanding your medicines", "staying close to family" and "having a home of your own". What an avenue for discussion that opened!

Each student was given a set of the Transition Communication cards to take home. One young lady said she couldn't wait to give them to her friend, because "she really needs a way to tell her parents what she wants."

The broad concept of "getting ready for life after high school" will only lead to sleepless nights. We assist families in taking the larger concepts of where a student wants to work, live and play after exiting high school down to the manageable steps of "what needs to be in Sue's plan at age 14 that will lead to those outcomes." If a student is in their final year of high school, the discussion will be quite different.

For more information about STEP's resources and offerings, visit www.tnstep.org or call 800-280-7837. STEP's services are available free to families and students and available to schools as in-service trainings for a fee; free if families and students are invited.

Karen Harrison is executive director of STEP and a graduate of Partners in Policymaking (1997-98).

make the shift to the new checklists. From the supervisor's perspective, it is a small change, but to Charlotte it can mean a big difference. Thus, without follow along support, Charlotte would probably struggle and might be at risk for losing her position.

Now let's check in with Charlotte on year two of employment. The department is happy with her performance, her checklist is being updated as supplies change thanks to her follow along specialist, and Charlotte's family has successfully navigated the pitfalls of her schedule. But Charlotte has an itch for change. She decided that she doesn't want to stock supplies anymore and that she'd rather sing for a living. Like the rest of us, Charlotte is

experiencing the mundane-ness of day-to-day employment. Who hasn't gotten the itch to quit their job and do something crazy? (Only for the purposes of this article, will I admit to it!)

Charlotte is well past the 90-day mark, but needs follow along at this point as much as she did at day one. From a simple conversation to a team meeting, Charlotte's concerns can be heard to help her re-focus on her goals of independence. Without this, Charlotte's mind could wander and her work performance could suffer.

From Charlotte's example, you can see how varied the definition of "follow along services" can be—from creating checklists, to working

with parents on schedules and transportation, to simply being a counselor when the road gets bumpy. Whatever the activity, each of these helps Charlotte maintain successful employment. The challenge is to anticipate the needs and to be able to respond effectively to any issues, whenever they arise. Job placement is obviously a vital part of Project Opportunity, but the existence of follow along services for as long as the individual is employed is crucial to employment success. When and if we can get the funding to support this, the sky is the limit for these incredible young adults!

Sara Ezell is program coordinator for Project Opportunity.

TRANSITION *from* SCHOOL *to* WORK *for* TENNESSEE STUDENTS *with* INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES



BY ROBERT B. NICHOLAS, PhD

INTRODUCTION

Transition is the process for students and their families to explore adult life after school and to develop a school experience to achieve their goals. For students with intellectual disabilities, the transition planning process is particularly important in determining whether they will have opportunities for employment and independence as they begin adult life. A recent national longitudinal study of post-high school outcomes of students with disabilities indicated that only 31% of youth with intellectual disabilities were employed after high school. [*Post-High School Outcomes of Youth with Disabilities up to 4 Years After High School*, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2, National Center for Special Education Research (2009-3017), Menlo Park, CA: SRI International.] Clearly, there is progress to be made in facilitating employment for these students.

The core federal policy guiding the transition process for students with disabilities is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as amended in 2004. All IDEA eligible students, including students with intellectual disabilities, are entitled to a free appropriate education that includes transition services. Each student is required to have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) which is updated annually. Federal regulations require that transition planning begin when the student turns 16 years of age. Tennessee regulations are more stringent and require transition planning to begin at age 14 (or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP team).

The federal regulations related to IDEA define transition services as "a coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability that...is designed with an outcome-oriented process, that promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation...is based on the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests; and...includes-

- (i) Instruction;
- (ii) Related services;
- (iii) Community experiences;
- (iv) The development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives;
- (v) If appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation."

This definition clearly presents employment as an outcome to

be promoted. Additionally, it recognizes the need for community experiences to serve as a point of reference for the student's preferences and interests.

The IDEA also recognizes the need to include agencies that will be providing adult services and supports in the transition planning process. Public education agencies are required to invite a representative of any agency that is likely to provide or pay for post-transition services to the IEP meetings when adult services are being considered. While the public education agency is not required to reschedule an IEP meeting if an invited agency representative does not attend, it is encouraged to take alternative steps, such as forwarding copies of materials from the IEP or scheduling an individual meeting, to gain the representative's participation in the planning process.

THE TRANSITION SYSTEM IN TENNESSEE; STATUS AND DIRECTIONS

PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS

The Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) provides oversight and a broad range of assistance to the State's public school systems. The TDOE Web site has a section on secondary transition for students with disabilities with extensive information for students, families and staff on the transition process. This section includes a useful PowerPoint for families with guidance on preparing students for employment.

Jane Winstead, director of Transition Services for TDOE, says quite directly that the TDOE "wants students with intellectual disabilities in paid employment before they leave school." She said that she thinks "we are making progress" toward this goal, however, there are considerable challenges.

Ms. Winstead noted that some school systems in the State still do not provide work-based learning opportunities. She said that one challenge to expanding work-based learning opportunities is that federal No Child Left Behind regulations hold schools accountable for academic achievement of all students, including students with disabilities. This priority competes for time and resources with the vocational curriculum, including work-based learning. She also noted that the considerable transportation resources needed to support work-based learning are a significant challenge, especially for school systems in rural areas. Ms. Winstead reported that there are very positive relationships between the TDOE, the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) and the Division of Intellectual Disabilities Services (DIDS) regarding employment planning for students with intellectual disabilities. However, a consequence of the DRS "Order of Selection" and the DIDS waiting list is that funding for employment services for students with intellectual disabilities is often not available. She said that school systems need to do the best they can to transition students

with intellectual disabilities to employment regardless of the availability of DRS and DIDS funding for employment supports.

TDOE contracts with the University of Tennessee, Center on Disability and Employment (UT-CDE) for teacher training regarding the transition process. The focus of this training is self-determination. Elizabeth Fussell, executive director of UT-CDE, noted that IEP regulations require active student involvement in the planning process. She said self-determination training is critical to preparing students to assume this role. To have the greatest impact, UT-CDE uses a train-the-teacher approach and currently trains teachers on self-determination at 100 high schools, 100 middle schools and nine elementary schools statewide. The teachers then teach self-determination to their students.

Specifically with regard to employment, Ms. Fussell said that she sees increasing interest across school systems in pursuing employment for students with intellectual disabilities. She agreed with Ms. Winstead, however, that academics are still a priority over vocational training in many school systems.

TDOE also contracts with The Arc of Tennessee for the "Secondary Transition Project". This project "helps families and students understand the transition process, see all of the possibilities for adult life, and become aware of resources available to make their dreams come true." The project has developed a secondary transition manual as a resource for students and families, and also provides training and serves as a resource to students and families on the secondary transition process. Treva Maitland, a transition specialist with the project, stressed the importance of self-determination training for students, saying that many students with intellectual disabilities lack the skills to actively participate in transition planning. Without those skills, the plan for their lives will be determined by others. She said the project offers training on a self-determined IEP process using Self-Directed IEPs. This training provides students with both the skills to participate in the IEP process and to direct it. She said that she would like to see self-determination introduced when students are young, even in early intervention programs.

With regard to employment, Ms. Maitland reported "pockets of good work by school systems to link students with intellectual disabilities to employment." She said, however, that there is still considerable lack of understanding of the capability of students with intellectual disabilities to work.

DIVISION OF REHABILITATION SERVICES

The Division of Rehabilitation Services offers a broad range of services to assist people with disabilities, including people with intellectual disabilities, to be employed. Due to limited funding, DRS maintains an Order of Selection that restricts the provision of services to people who are most in need. While each person's eligibility and priority category assignment is individualized, a significant percentage of people with intellectual disabilities are determined eligible to receive appropriate vocational rehabilitation services. Accordingly, the involvement of DRS in IEP planning for students with intellectual disabilities is critical to

facilitating employment outcomes.

Mary Jane Ware, DRS program coordinator for Transition Services, said that there is a DRS counselor assigned to each high school in the State. These counselors serve as liaisons to transition planning and can determine eligibility, open a case with DRS and assist in career exploration, generally during a student's exit year. Ms. Ware said that DRS also provides transition grants to 23 school systems, providing state-funded DRS counselors and shared cost for support staff or job coaches. The grant agreements allow more focused, enhanced transition services to assist DRS eligible students with job exploration and transition to postsecondary employment.

Ms. Ware said that, overall, she is very impressed with the educators who collaborate with DRS. She said she is very pleased to see a growing number of students with intellectual disabilities with employment as a transition goal.

Jennifer Jones, a DRS counselor with considerable experience in serving people with intellectual disabilities, agreed, saying that she has positive relationships with teachers in the Knox County School system and enjoys collaborating with them on transition from school to work. Ms. Jones said that students with intellectual disabilities who are on the DIDS waiting list are a challenge because there is no funding for supports for job retention. She said she doesn't "slam the door" on their plan for employment but will generally open a case to give the student an opportunity to "show what they can do." She also noted a shortage of transportation resources and the need for family preparation on the implications of work as challenges.

DIVISION OF INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES SERVICES

The Division of Intellectual Disability Services is the primary provider of services and supports, including employment supports for job retention, for people with intellectual disabilities. DIDS has an Employment First! policy that states that employment will be the first day services option considered for all people served in the community. As noted, however, DIDS has an extensive waiting list for its services and only accepts new people if they are in crisis. The DIDS waiting list is a significant barrier to transitioning students with intellectual disabilities who will need supports for job retention.

There are, however, many students who are on the DIDS caseload who will have access to DIDS funding for adult services, including employment supports. Laura Doutre, the director of Person-Centered Practice for DIDS said, "It is an expectation that Independent Support Coordinators (ISCs) and case managers (CM) attend IEP meetings and ensure that the ISP (DIDS Individual Support Plan) and IEP are two plans working together to achieve desired outcomes for school aged children, and not the opposite. The DIDS expectation is that the ISC and CM ensures that school to work transition is addressed in ISPs as outcomes for students."

Julie Huber, director for Day Services for DIDS, said that she views

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transition for students with intellectual disabilities as a critical process. "It's easier to roll up our sleeves now when people are young and help them find what works than it is to help someone 'undo' the effects of years of dependence and isolation." She noted, however, "I don't think that the expectation of work or postsecondary education has always been prevalent for young people with intellectual disabilities. So, one of the first issues we have to address is, what are the expectations for students...?"

Ms. Huber also said that DIDS is working to make "Discovery" a core component of all day services. Discovery is a process of exploration to assist a person to identify opportunities in the community and emphasize what they "shine at". DIDS' efforts to date have been largely focused on adults but "we'd also like to find ways to ensure that services teenagers and even children receive are grounded in Discovery."

Community services agencies under contract with DIDS are also an important resource for transition planning. O'Dell Tiller, community supports coordinator for Orange Grove Center, said his agency sends staff to meet with faculty, staff and principals at local high schools to educate them on services provided by the agency. Additionally, Orange Grove staff are frequently asked to come to participate in IEP meetings. He sees this as a valuable opportunity to talk to families and ensure that everyone has a common perspective on what services are available. He concluded that "any investment in employment is money well spent."

Bob Sexton, executive director of the Cerebral Palsy Center of Knoxville, said that the absence of DIDS funding for employment and accompanying supports is a disincentive to employment for families and provider agencies. Time-limited supports from DRS and part time work frequently conflict with the family's own work schedule. As a result, many students with intellectual disabilities forego employment. He also noted that when students are placed in jobs, DRS requires provider agencies to provide indefinite follow along services that are unfunded. He said that his agency now provides unfunded follow along supports to 30 people at a significant cost to his agency.

BENEFITS TO WORK

Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) projects "work with SSA (Social Security Administration) beneficiaries with disabilities on job placement, benefits planning, and career development. WIPAs are authorized to serve all SSA beneficiaries with disabilities, including transition-to-work aged youth, providing benefits planning and assistance services on request and as resources permit." Most transitioning youth with intellectual disabilities are receiving SSI (Supplemental Security Income) or other SSA benefits and are eligible to receive assistance from a WIPA project. In Tennessee, there are two WIPA projects which cover the entire State. One is operated by the Tennessee Disability Coalition and the other by the Center for Independent Living of Middle Tennessee.

Cathy Randall, former program manager for the WIPA Project operated by the Tennessee Disability Coalition, said the project does not get many calls from school systems for assistance in benefits planning for transitioning youth and a relatively small percentage of the people it serves are between the ages of 14 and 18. The SSA priority for WIPA is to serve people who are closest to employment. However, the project has the capacity to provide workshops for school system staff and family groups. Ms. Randall said that she got few requests for such workshops. The project also holds Work Incentive Seminars Events (WISE) around the State for beneficiaries to educate them on work options and community resources. Transitioning students are eligible to attend these events as well.

Ms. Randall said she thinks there is insufficient attention given to benefits planning in the transition process for students with intellectual disabilities. She said this can have negative implications for opportunities for employment and for access to health care coverage.

Robert B. Nicholas, PhD, is a Senior Visiting Fellow for Disability Research at the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University. He coordinates the research agenda for the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy funded National Technical Assistance and Research Leadership Center. He also provides technical assistance to the Tennessee Employment Consortium under a grant contract with the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities. He resides in Corryton, Tennessee.

JOSH MURRAY IN TRANSITION

BY JUDY YORK

Josh Murray joined the Knoxville Seamless

Transition Program in October of 2006. He adjusted well to the program despite the death of his mother shortly thereafter. He was faced with the possibility of being homeless, but had a strong determination to do what he

had to do to be independent. He wanted to get a job as quickly as possible.

Two months later he was hired by a local produce distribution company and worked five days a week. Josh had the support of the entire Transition staff behind him and

received job coach services to assist him with training. He proved to be a loyal and productive employee. Unfortunately, in August of 2007, the company went out of business. During his entire employment experience with this company, there loomed uncertainty of his living arrangement. The loss of his job only made matters worse as family members were resistant to take him in.

SEAMLESS TRANSITION IN EAST TENNESSEE

BY BOB SEXTON Full of promise for new beginnings, Spring is a favorite time for many people. However, I'm sure Tennessee's service providers would agree that enjoyment of this beautiful season has always been tempered by the expected onslaught of calls from parents in shock from their first attempt at figuring out the mysterious and elusive world of adult services, as their children are set to exit the education system.

The reasons this time of transition from school to adult services is so fraught with confusion, disappointment and frustration are many. Clearly, many people start too late; some are paralyzed by their inability to understand the varying roles of service providers, case managers and the State; and others have trouble shifting from the mindset that education services are legally mandated to accepting that only those who have the best advocates or those in the deepest crisis will receive adult services.

Whatever the reason, the failure of young people with intellectual disabilities to smoothly and successfully transition from the education system to adult services is not a problem experienced only in Knox County or in Tennessee. In a study conducted by the National Council on Education in 2000, it was discovered that, two years after graduation from high school, only 13% of young people with intellectual disabilities were working. Where were the 87%, for whom billions of dollars had been spent on their education? Sadly, most were sitting at home, watching television, and many parents had left the work force to stay at home with their young adult child. Of course, some young people were attending day activity centers and sheltered workshops, but is that what we really want for our nation's thousands of young people, who—like Spring's flowers—are ready to grow and exhibit their energy and potential?

No wonder, then, that our excitement grew here in Knoxville when we learned of a service model implemented in 12 school districts in the San Francisco Bay area that resulted in 73% of the young adults exiting the education system with a job, volunteer work, an adult service provider and a busy schedule of valued non-work activities already in place! This program, called the Transition Service Integration Model (TSIM), merges educational and adult services during the final year

of school. The model's motto is "The last day of school shall be no different than the day after school."

In late 2004, the University of Tennessee's Center on Disability and Employment convened a meeting to discuss the feasibility of replicating the TSIM in Knoxville. Potential project partners at the meeting were Knox County Schools, the Tennessee Division of Rehabilitation Services and the Tennessee Division of Intellectual Disabilities Services (DIDS). The Cerebral Palsy Center of Knoxville and Workforce Connections—a division of the Knoxville-Knox County Community Action Committee—were invited as the possible "hybrid" agency that would actually implement the project. At the meeting, all present committed to making the Knoxville project a reality and by February 2005 the project was underway.

The program involves a 1:3 ratio of staff to young adults, implementing a very precise and full six-hour schedule of community instruction, formed by an intensive discovery process and person-centered planning. Each participant is picked up every day just as the school bus always did, and returned home at the end of the day, by project staff. The entire day is spent in total community immersion, developing work and non-work activities that are meaningful to each person. Employment is the project cornerstone and job assessments, job development, stabilization and follow-along are all part of the daily activity schedule. Non-work activities are built alongside employment to improve the participants' quality of life and to provide for a meaningful day.

As the project's fifth year draws to a close, it is gratifying to know that over 70% of the participants who have gone through Knoxville's program have become employed. Many have developed, in addition, a busy schedule of volunteer work, personal improvement activities, hobbies and friendships that have greatly enhanced their lives. As the State's economic condition has continued to worsen and only individuals in the most dire crisis are gaining entry to the DIDS service system, it is indeed a welcome relief to know that most project participants will have jobs to support and nurture them and that their need for and dependence on DIDS' funded services has lessened.

Bob Sexton is director of the United Cerebral Palsy Center in Knoxville.

But he was eager to find another job as quickly as possible, always hoping he could earn enough money to take care of himself. Just two months later, through the efforts of the Transition Team, Josh was hired with the Food City right in his neighborhood. He works 25 – 30 hours a week as a courtesy clerk. Josh stated that he likes his job very much and has made some good friends. He

is currently living with his uncle, who also provides transportation to and from work. This arrangement is working out well for Josh and we wish him all the best. Josh is truly a success story.

Judy York is a career specialist for Workforce Connections.



PATHFINDER NEWS

In an ideal world, every student would have a seamless, positive educational experience; however, in the real world students and their families often feel overwhelmed when navigating the educational maze. From early intervention programs through high school graduation and beyond, educational success is most often achieved through cooperative collaboration between students, their families, service providers, educators and administrators. When direction is needed or difficulties arise, there are several agencies across Tennessee which provide families with valuable resources, IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) information and advocacy.

STATEWIDE

TEIS—TENNESSEE EARLY INTERVENTION SYSTEM

A statewide program sponsored by the Tennessee Department of Education; a network of nine district offices that provide early intervention services to infants and toddlers (birth to three years) with special needs and their families; home-based; provide information about public and private service providers, early intervention professionals, family support organizations and other service providers to infants and toddlers with disabilities.

For information regarding children birth through 2 years of age, contact
 Linda Hartbarger
 Part C Coordinator
 Division of Special Education
 Phone: 615-253-5032
 E-mail: Linda.Hartbarger@tn.gov

For information regarding children 3 to 5 years of age, contact
 Jamie Kilpatrick
 Director of the Office of Early Childhood
 Division of Special Education
 Phone: 615-741-3537, Toll Free 800-852-7157
 E-mail: Jamie.Kilpatrick@tn.gov

TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, DIVISION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

State office responsible for special education services in Tennessee; provides information and guidance to school districts and parents regarding the IDEA; West, Middle and East Regional Resource Centers provide training and consultation to parents and educators; provides printed information in both English and Spanish.

Contact: Joseph Fisher
 Assistant Commissioner
 Phone: 615-741-2851, Toll Free 888-212-3162
 E-mail: Joe.Fisher@tn.gov

THE CAN-LEARN PROJECT, UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE COLLEGE OF LAW

Mission is to refer families who have education-related legal issues (both special and general) to CAN-LEARN legal representatives within their network and serve as a back-up and support center for lawyers and other professionals who engage in education representation; do not provide direct legal representation; sponsors seminars, trainings and workshops in education-related legal issues.

Contact: Barbara H. Dyer
 Staff Attorney
 Phone: 865-974-4141
 E-mail: bhdyer1@netscape.net

DCE—DISABILITY COALITION ON EDUCATION

A statewide alliance of family members, educators, State and advocacy organizations focused on bringing about positive change in the education of students with and without disabilities. DCE creates partnerships among families, schools and communities to ensure that all students receive quality education, enjoy a high level of quality of school life in all its aspects, and that rules, regulations, policies and practices provide for equal opportunities for all children.

E-mail: dce@dce-tn.org
 Web site: www.dce-tn.org

BY ANGELA BECHTEL

STEP—SUPPORT & TRAINING FOR EXCEPTIONAL PARENTS

Provides statewide parent training series/ workshops on various topics related to special education; written information on a variety of special education topics.

Contact: Sally Ottinger
 Information Coordinator
 Phone: 423-639-8802, Toll Free 800-280-7837,
 TTY 423-639-0125
 E-mail: information@tnstep.org

SECONDARY TRANSITION PROJECT, THE ARC OF TENNESSEE

Helps families and students prepare for the challenges of Secondary Transition.

Contact: Loria Richardson or Treva Maitland
 Project Coordinators
 Phone: Toll Free 800-835-7077
 E-mail: lrichardson@thearcctn.org or
 tmaitland@thearcctn.org

EAST TENNESSEE

ETRRC—EAST TENNESSEE REGIONAL RESOURCE CENTER

Educational consultants with the Tennessee Department of Education; provide technical assistance to local schools; in-service training for teachers and administrators; Family Service Consultant helps families access community or educational services.

Contact: Robert Winstead
 Coordinator
 Phone: 865-594-5691
 E-mail: robert.winstead@tn.gov
 Web site: www.tennessee.gov/education/speced/

NAPPE—NETWORK OF ADVOCATES FOR PROMISING PRACTICES IN EDUCATION

Provides training for professionals and families on implementing inclusive practices; consultation with educators on inclusion in the classroom; advocacy for families, including resources and materials that support inclusion.

Contact: Barbara Dyer
 Director
 Phone: 423-534-9827
 E-mail: bhdyer1@netscape.net

CARE—CHATTANOOGA AREA RESOURCE AND EDUCATION

Provides education and support to families.
Contact: Virginia Piper
Project Director
Phone: 423-662-4007

MIDDLE TENNESSEE

MTRRC—MIDDLE TENNESSEE REGIONAL RESOURCE CENTER

Educational consultants with the Tennessee Department of Education; provide technical assistance to local schools; in-service training for teachers and administrators; Family Service Consultant helps families access community or educational services.
Contact: Bob Blair
Coordinator
Phone: 615-253-1794, TTY 615-532-3258
E-mail: bob.blair@tn.gov
Web site: www.tennessee.gov/education/speced/

TENNESSEE VOICES FOR CHILDREN

Provides advocacy for families whose children have emotional, behavioral or mental health

issues. Programs include Child Care Consulting (on-site consultation and training to parents and staff); teen mental health screening; research; Statewide Family Support Network (advocacy, information, resources and referrals for parents and professionals, parent support groups, training, education and community awareness); Tennessee Parent Information and Resource Center (TPIRC) provides training, collaboration and technical assistance to parents and schools.

Contact: Charlotte Bryson
Director
Phone: 615-269-7751, Toll Free 800-670-9882
E-mail: TVC@tnvoices.org

WTRRC—WEST TENNESSEE REGIONAL RESOURCE CENTER

Educational consultants with the Tennessee Department of Education; provide technical assistance to local schools; in-service training for teachers and administrators; Family Service Consultant helps families access community or educational services.

Contact: Larry Greer
Director
Phone: 731-265-0415

E-mail: larry.greer@tn.gov
Web site: www.tennessee.gov/education/speced/

RISE—(RESTRUCTURING FOR INCLUSIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS) MEMPHIS

An assistance and support project from the Tennessee Department of Education to help structure inclusive school environments for all students; facilitate positive behavior support teams for students with behavioral and emotional issues; in-service training programs on a variety of topics, including Inclusion, Behavior Management, Technology Assessments, Parent Issues and others; lending library of materials and resources on inclusion.

Contact: Sarah Bicard
Project Director
Phone: 901-678-4932
E-mail: sbicard@memphis.edu

Angela Bechtel, MSSW, is information & referral services coordinator with Tennessee Disability Pathfinder.



TENNESSEE YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM

A FREE LEADERSHIP AND ADVOCACY TRAINING PROGRAM FOR
TENNESSEE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

JULY 5-8, 2010

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For an application or more information contact:

Ned Andrew Solomon, ned.solomon@tn.gov or 615-532-6556



DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS: **MARCH 1, 2010**

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