TOGETHER AS A TEAM!



FEATURING THE

**ANNUAL SUMMIT** 

ON DISABILITIES

HYATT REGENCY ORLANDOJUNE 13-15, 2025



# Dear Family Café Attendees,

On behalf of The Family Café Board of Directors, welcome to The 27th Annual Family Café!

As a Board, we are committed to making The Family Café as strong and effective as possible, so it can continue connecting the families, self-advocates, and organizations it serves with information, resources, and opportunities to build community across all kinds of disability experience, today and for years to come.

Even though we serve as The Family Café's Board of Directors, our commitment to The Family Café's mission "to provide individuals with disabilities and their families with an opportunity for Collaboration, Advocacy, Friendship and Empowerment by serving as a facilitator of communication, a space for dialogue and a source of information" is personal. That's because like you, we are self-advocates, family members, and advocates that live the disability experience every day.

Please enjoy everything that our excellent staff has put together for you this weekend at The 27th Annual Family Café. It's a truly remarkable event, and there's nothing quite like it anywhere else. We very much hope you make the most of it, and that you come away energized and informed.

If you'd like to say hello or share some feedback about your experience here at The 27th Annual Family Café, we'll be wearing our signature red chef coats throughout the event, so we'll be easy to find. Feel free to let us know how you're doing, and what we can do to help you get whatever would make a difference for you out of your time here.

Again, please accept our warmest welcome. Thank you for making The Family Café family a part of yours!



Yours.

The Family Café Board of Directors



# Dear Family Café Attendees,

On behalf of The Family Café Planning Committee, welcome to the three great days of Collaboration, Advocacy, Friendship and Empowerment we call The 27th Annual Family Café!

The Family Café Planning Committee, which is comprised of self-advocates, family members, fellow nonprofits, and state agency partners, has always played a central role in planning The Annual Family Café. It is our mission to provide you and your family with an opportunity to connect, learn, and find the resources you need in a friendly, family-centered environment.

We've done our best to put together our best-ever event with something for everyone here in 2025. Thanks for coming with us on this journey, and for being a part of our family!

As always, the backbone of our agenda is made up of hour-long breakout sessions on all manner of disability-related topics. We've rearranged the schedule this year, with 243 sessions scheduled across eight time slots instead of seven, providing you with one more chance to hear about a topic that's important to you. No matter what type of disability you experience, what stage of life you're in, or what issue interests you, you are sure to find sessions that speak to your needs. Many sessions are organized into "tracks" by subject area: Advocacy, Assistive Technology, Birth to Age Five, Dads, Disaster Preparedness, Employment, Guardianship, Mental Health, Military Families, Recreation, Smart Money, and Youth. Just look for the graphic icons by the titles in the program!

We also have a great series of keynotes in store. On Friday, we'll welcome Board Certified Cognitive Specialist, founder of Minds of All Kinds, and passionate advocate for a more inclusive and accessible world, Margaux Joffe. On Saturday, come hear from CC Taylor, a young advocate with Spina Bifida who played the role of Young Nessarose in the film Wicked. On Sunday we'll be talking mental health, as professional speaker, drummer, and author of Transforming Stigma: How to Become a Mental Wellness Superhero shares his path to wellness.

In addition to our series of keynotes, The Annual Family Café will once again include The Annual Summit on Disabilities, moderated by our long-time supporter, former Senate President Bill Galvano. This is your chance to get engaged and hear from statewide leaders and policymakers about their vision for Florida's disability-serving systems.

When you're not in a session, enjoying a keynote, or taking part in the Summit, please take some time to visit the dozens of booths in our Exhibit Hall, which feature a wide array of organizations, including a host of self-advocate owned and operated Micro-Enterprises. We also encourage you to enjoy adaptive recreation activities provided by our friends from SportsAbility and the Book Fair in the Exhibit Hall, visit the many activity rooms we have set up, and check out all of the self-advocate performances ongoing throughout the event. There's no shortage of things to do!

We've done our best to bring together the information and resources you need in a space the celebrates the disability experience and families like yours. We hope The 27th Annual Family Café leaves you energized, empowered, and inspired! As always, please let us know if there is anything we can do to serve you better!



Yours,

The Family Café
Planning Committee



persons with disabilities

June 13, 2025

# Dear Annual Family Café Participants:

On behalf of the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD), it is On penant or the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD), it is my pleasure to welcome you to the 27th Annual Family Café. The my pleasure to welcome you to the Z/- Annual Family Annual Family Cafe provides an opportunity to access information, learn about resources, and connect with others iniorinauon, iearn about resources, and connect with others regarding opportunities important to individuals with disabilities and their families.

APD is dedicated to assisting individuals with disabilities and their APU is dedicated to assisting individuals with disabilities and the families in living, learning, and working in their communities by creating multiple pathways to possibilities. We are committed to continuing to work in partnership with individuals families. creamy mumple paraways to possibilities, vie are committee continuing to work in partnership with individuals, families, continuing to work in partnership with monitousits, rannies, providers, and community partners to promote independence by providing a variety of supports and services.

Events like the Annual Family Café are a great way that Events like the Annual Parmiy Care are a great way unat individuals and families can hear about innovative resources and

I hope you enjoy the conference and take the time to connect,

TOGETHER ASA TEAM! Sincerely,

Ron DeSantis

rena Fulcher

Acting Director

State Office

Florida

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(866-273-2273)





State Board of Education

Ben Gibson, Chair Ryan Petty, Vice Chair

June 13, 2025

Welcome to the 27th Annual Family Cafe and Governor's Summit on Disabilities. This innovative event brings together individuals with disabilities and their families to share information and network. The Florida Department of Education (FDOE) is committed to providing access to world-class education options for all of Florida's nearly 2.9 million students.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Florida continues to prioritize protecting parents' rights, investing in educators, enhancing access to services and working to increase student achievement.

- FDOE is a national leader in education, as demonstrated by recent performance:

  The high school graduation rate of Florida's students with disabilities continues to increase, with 86.8% graduating in 2023-24. This is an increase of 20.8 percentage and received 2016-17.
  - points since 2016-17.

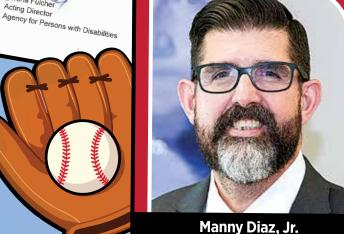
    Florida was ranked #1 overall by the Heritage Foundation on the 2024 Education Freedom Report Card. Florida remains the top-ranked state overall. Florida lawmakers have expanded education freedom and promoted parents' rights while creating laudable returns on investment and transparency for taxpayers.

    Florida was also ranked #1 on the 2025 EdChoice Friedman Index, reflecting the state's expansive school choice programs and the availability of Education Savings Accounts for families to use for additional educational services.

- The Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities (FES-UA), established in 2021, offers families of students with disabilities, as young as 3 years of age, access to additional educational resources. Specifically:

  Families may receive a personal education savings account (ESA) for their student.

  With an ESA, parents deposit public funds into government-authorized savings accounts with restricted, but multiple uses, instead of having their child attend a public school.
  - An ESA can fund private school tuition and fees, online learning programs, private tutoring, community or state college costs, higher education expenses and other approved customized learning materials.



Families apply and annually renew participation in an FES-UA through one of the approved schoiarship funding organizations responsible for determining eligibility, awarding and distributing funding to eligible student accounts, and approving eligible school were 122 051 students received an FES-UA with an approximation.

- expenditures.

  For the 2024-25 school year, 122,051 students received an FES-UA, with an average scholarship worth approximately \$10,000.00.

  Applications for the 2025-26 school year are now available. Families can apply through Step Up For Students or the Academic Achievement Accessible Scholarship as follows:
- Follows:
  Eligibility requirements: Students must be 3 or 4 years old, or eligible to enroll in kindergarten through 12th grade in a public school in Florida. They must also have an individualized educational plan or a disability diagnosis from a licensed physician or psychologist. an individualized educational plan or a disability diagnosis from a licensed physician or psychologist. ESA: The scholarship provides access to an ESA, which functions like a flexible bank account. Funds can be used for tuition, therapies, tutoring and other services. Approved providers include licensed speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists and other providers.

Florida is the Education State and, without question, students, parents and teachers benefit from our state's robust array of education options. I hope you enjoy the next three days, guthering new information and resources through breakout sessions, the exhibit hall and keynote speakers.



MD/cs

325 W. Geines Street: | Tallahassee, Fl. 32399-0400 | 850-245-0505





State Board of Education

Ben Gibson, Chair Ryan Petty, Vice Chair Members Esther Byrd Grazie P. Christie Daniel P. Foganholi, Sr. Keily Garcia MaryLynn Magar

March 26, 2025

On behalf of the Florida Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), I am honored to welcome you to the 27th Annual Family Café conference. Our mission at VR is to ensure all Floridians with disabilities have access to and the ability to obtain high-quality employment. VR's Floridians with disabilities have access to and the ability to obtain high-quality employment. Floridians with disabilities have access to and the ability to obtain high-quality employment. Floridains with disabilities have access to and the ability to help participants plan for the future and dedicated counseling to help participants and job placement. We dedicated counseling to fire assistance in a number of areas such as skills training and job placement. We remain a committee partner for individuals looking to enter Florida's dynamic workforce. During the conference, you will have the opportunity to learn more about different programs and services presented by experts in the field. Topics include:

- FIG.-Employment Transition Services for Students with Disabilities
  Supported Employment: Building Career Pathways for Individuals with Most Significant
  Disabilities
  Evolution Voye Employment Outline with Piches & West. Pre-Employment Transition Services for Students with Disabilities

I would also like to invite you to stop by VR's booth in the exhibition hall to speak with VR staff, complete a referral or get additional information on how VR can help you in your employment journey.

Thank you for choosing to participate in this year's Family Café. If you should have any questions after you leave the conference, please feel free to reach out to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation or any of our area offices throughout the state. More information about how to contact us is always available at the state when the state were remarked that is always available at the state. We will not contact the state when the state were remarked that the state were remarked that the state when the state were remarked that the state when the state were remarked that the state were remarked that the state were remarked to the state when the state were remarked to the state were remarked to the state when the state were remarked to the state were remarked to the state when the state were remarked to the state were remarked to the state when the state were



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Manny Diaz, Jr. Commissioner of Education

Kelly Ro



Ben Gibson, Chair Ryan Petty, Vice Chair Members Esther Byrd Grazie P. Christie Daniel P. Foganholi, Sr. Kelly Garcia MaryLynn Magar



It is my great honor to welcome you to the 27th Annual Family Café. This annual gathering stands as a powerful testament to Florida's enduring commitment to individuals with disabilities and their families—through collaboration and a steadfast resolve to empower our students and to

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF

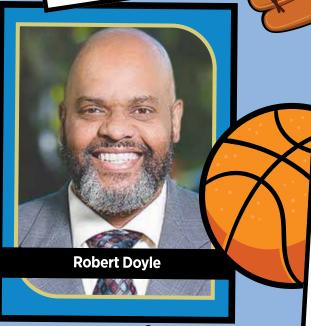
At the Florida Division of Blind Services (DBS), we are resolute in our mission to equip blind At the Fiorida Division of Blind Services (DBS), we are resonate in our mission to equip plana and visually impaired Floridians of all ages with the tools, training, support and confidence needed to lead independent and successful lives. From our Blind Babies Program and Children's needed to lead independent and successful lives. From our brain basies Frogram and Chindren Services to Transition Services, Independent Living and comprehensive Employment Services, we proudly serve Floridians at every age and stage of vision loss.

This vital work is made possible thanks to the unwavering leadership of Governor Ron DeSantis, Education Commissioner Manny Diaz, Jr., Senior Chancellor Kimberly Richey and our Florida Legislature. Their dedication to education, workforce preparation and results-driven services continues to expand meaningful opportunities for those we serve.

As you take part in this year's Family Café, I encourage you to explore the wide range of As you take part in this year's Family Cate, I encourage you to explore the wide range of sessions, engage with exhibitors and connect with the many families and professionals who share in this important mission—to ensure that all Floridians with disabilities can access the tools and nr uns important mission—to ensure that an i formatis with disabilities support they need to live fully and contribute meaningfully to our state.

Thank you for being part of this remarkable community and for the vital role you play in helping Thank you for occup part of this remarkable community and for the vital role you play in helping us build a Florida where every person with vision loss is equipped and empowered to reach their highest potential. We also encourage you to explore more resources and learn more about how DBS can help all blind and visually impaired Floridians by visiting our website at dbs.fldoe.org.

Robert L. Doyle, III





# DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Office of the Executive Director 2601 South Blair Stone Road Suite C-300

Tallahassee, FL 32399 (850) 782-4307 www.FloridaVets.org

On behalf of the men and women of the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs Un benan of the men and women of the riorida Department of Veteralis Anans (FDVA), I welcome you to the 27th Annual Family Café in Orlando. The Family Café more provided to the 27th Annual Family Café in Orlando. The Family Café more provided to the 27th Annual Family Café in Orlando. The Family Café in Orlan

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survivors, we are proud to join you and your renow detection, advocacy, friendship and empowerment.

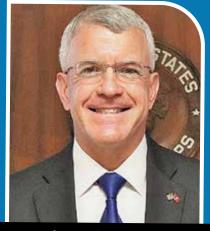
(FIDVA), I welcome you to the 2/th Annual ramily Late in Urlando. The ramily Late superbly empowers individuals with disabilities and their families as a facilitator of superbly empowers for dialogue and a source of tital information.

As a state agency representing Florida's 1.4 million Veterans, their families and survivors we are proud to join you and your follow delegates in the exist of survivors, we are proud to join you and your fellow delegates in the spirit of

For our Veterans in the audience, we honor your service and are proud to serve you.



April 8, 2025



James S. Hartsell

GA

You can learn more about earned services, benefits and support by visiting us at www.FloridaVets.org or calling (727) 319-7440. Welcome again and enjoy your event.

Sincerely

Fellow Floridians -

Major General, U.S. Marine Corps (Ret) James S. Hartsell Executive Director



Ron DeSantis, Governor

Dear Family Café Participants:

Kevin Guthrie, Executive Director

On behalf of the Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM), I am honored to welcome you to the 27th Annual Un behalf of the Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM), I am nonored to welcome you to the Z/Ith Annual Family Café. FDEM is dedicated to supporting individuals with special needs, along with their families and caregivers. The increase in the accomplishing the processor requires to proper for any amorphory that may impact their computitive. Family Cate. FDEM is dedicated to supporting individuals with special needs, along with their families and caregivers, by increasing the accessibility of necessary resources to prepare for any emergency that may impact their community. Through the Family Café, we can coordinate and collaborate with other state appendix to facilitate ones dislated upon dislated to the control of by increasing the accessibility of necessary resources to prepare for any emergency that may impact their community.

Through the Family Café, we can coordinate and collaborate with other state agencies to facilitate open dialoge with other state. As Expertise Dispate 1 and output that appropriate residents and use all participants to Through the Family Care, we can coordinate and conductate with other state agencies to racinitate open dialogue with state officials. As Executive Director, I support all endeavors that empower our residents and urge all participants to

The 2025 Atlantic Hurricane Season will begin on June 1 and run through November 30. Preparing and planning ahead of time is crucial—EDEM prepared was required to ensure we are equipped to support Eloridians through the possibility. The 2025 Atlantic Hurricane Season will begin on June 1 and run through November 30. Preparing and planning ahead of time is crucial—FDEM prepares year-round to ensure we are equipped to support Floridians through the possibility their one storm. But it only takes one storm to impact lives, and FDEM encourages all residents to be prepared for

When preparing for hurricane season, it is important to build a disaster supply kit for each individual and pet in the household, stocked with at least seven days of supplies for each member. These supplies include, but are not limited to, nonperishable food, water, a weather radio and medical necessities like medical alert tags or bracelets, contact information for loved ones and medical providers and any other important documents. For residents with power to, nonperisnable rood, water, a weather radio and medical necessities like medical alert tags or praceiets, contact information for loved ones and medical providers, and any other important documents. For residents with power whose has sure to have extra hatteries. We information for loved ones and medical providers, and any other important documents. For residents with power wheelchairs or other battery-operated medical or assistive technology devices, be sure to have extra batteries. We encourage all Floridians to have multiple ways to receive emergency alerts. Sign up for emergency alerts at visit FloridaDisaster orn/PlanPrenare for additional preparedness tins and encourage all Floridians to nave mutuple ways to receive emergency alerts. Sign up for emergency alerts at <u>FloridaDisaster.org/AlertFlorida</u> and visit <u>FloridaDisaster.org/PlanPrepare</u> for additional preparedness tips and resources, including a full disaster supply kit checklist.

FDEM also encourages residents with special needs to register with the Special Needs Registry, which connects individuals with their local emergency management office and health departments by providing first responders with rucm also encourages residents with special needs to register with the Special Needs Registry, which connects individuals with their local emergency management office and health departments by providing first responders with a providing first responders with the special needs are met before during and after a disaster. To large more and individuals with their local emergency management office and neatin departments by providing first responders with valuable information to ensure that residents' needs are met before, during and after a disaster. To learn more and sign up for the Special Meads Denistry, please vicit FloridaDisaster pro/SNR or contact your local county emergency. valuable information to ensure that residents needs are met before, ouring and after a disaster. To learn more and sign up for the Special Needs Registry, please visit <u>FloridaDisaster.org/SNR</u> or contact your local county emergency.

FDEM is here to support Floridians every step of the way. We hope you leave the Family Café feeling empowered with valuable knowledge and aware of the many resources available to you. And remember, your local county emergency with any nuestions or concerns you may have. Stay informed, stay prepared, and stay safel. management office will have specialized resources and area-specific information and is with any questions or concerns you may have. Stay informed, stay prepared and stay safe!

Kevin Guthrie Executive Director

DIVISION HEADQUARTER 2555 Shumard Oak Boulevard Tallahassee, FL 32399-2100

Telephone: 850-815-4000 www.FloridaDisaster.org

STATE LOGISTICS RESPONSE CENTER
2702 Directors Row
Orlando, FL 32809-5631



**Kevin Guthrie** 

# TOGETHER



# **WOULD LIKE TO THANK THIS YEAR'S SPONSORS**



**Head Chef** 



**Sous Chef** 



**Pastry Chef** 

**WELLS FARGO** 













**A La Carte Sponsors** 







# THE FAMILY CAFÉ WISHES TO THANK THE FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE FAMILY CAFÉ PLANNING COMMITTEE

The ABLE Trust
ABLE United

Disability Rights Florida

The Family Café Board of Directors

The Family-Run Organization Movement (FROM)

Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities

Florida Community Care

Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services

Florida Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Florida Department of Health, Children and Youth with

Special Health Care Needs Program

Florida Department of Health, Children's Medical Services

Florida Department of Health, Early Steps Program

Florida Healthy Kids Corporation

Florida Youth Council

Mike DiMauro

SportsAbility Alliance

Sunshine Health

U.S. Military

7-Dippity







The Family Café exists to provide individuals with disabilities and their families with an opportunity for Collaboration, Advocacy, Friendship and Empowerment by serving as a facilitator of communication, a space for dialogue, and a source of information.

# **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**



Jim DeBeaugrine, Board Chair

Mark Fafard

Lori Fahey

Staar Fields

Jeannie Forthuber

Yolanda Herrera

Patricia Ann Oglesby

Sen. Ana Maria Rodriguez

**Angelita Salado** 

**Tammy Turner** 

Gil Williams

# STAFF

Lori Fahey, President and CEO Jeremy Countryman, Vice President

Joe McCann, Policy Manager

Sarah Fahey, Event Manager

Tanya Hansen, Financial Administrator





# First Time At The Annual Family Café? This Page Is For You!

First of all, welcome to The Family Café family! We're so happy you're here, and we want you to feel at home!

- The Annual Family Café takes place over three days. Most of the agenda is made up of hour-long "breakout sessions" that address all kinds of disability topics. There are three blocks of sessions on Friday and five on Saturday.
- There's also one **90-minute Keynote session** in the **Plaza International Ballroom** on **each day**, as well as a conversation about disability policy at **The Annual Summit on Disabilities on Friday night** and a **Dance Party on Saturday night**.
- The daily listings in the program for each day have **key events to attend in bold**.
- Our **smartphone app is a great way to keep track of the agenda!** Everything can be sorted by **Tracks**, which are also listed in the print program, as well as by **Tags** like "Caregivers & Families," "Education," and "Health & Medical," among others, to help you **find sessions about topics that are important to you**.
- Sessions tagged "Welcome to the DisCo!" in the app are great for new parents!
- The Annual Family Café is a kid-friendly place, and your children are welcome throughout the conference.
   Many kids enjoy visiting the Exhibit Hall where there's a lot to see and do. We also have several interactive Activity Rooms, a coloring station, and live performances to check out.
- Hungry? There will be cash concessions on Saturday, and a 20% discount on all dining at the Hyatt all weekend.
- **Self-parking is free** in the Hyatt Regency Orlando garage, daily visitors included.
- Need to talk to someone? The Family Café staff and Board of Directors are all wearing red chef coats and can
  assist you with any questions. We also have volunteer Room Monitors wearing aprons that can help you find
  the room you're looking for.



We are SO happy you're here!
Welcome Home!

### **ABILITIES WORKSHOP, INC.**

631 Palm Springs Drive, Suite 107 Altamonte Springs, FL 32701 (407) 951-6117 jeanetta@abilitiesworkshop.com abilitiesworkshop.com

### **ABLE UNITED**

2011 Delta Boulevard Tallahassee, FL 32303 (888) 524-2253 info@ableunited.com ableunited.com

# ABRAM'S NATION MAKER OF THE SAFETY SLEEPER

4726 Highpoint Drive Gibsonia, PA 15044 (412) 719-9128 marketing@abramsnation.com safetysleeper.com

### **ACCESSREC**

67 Sand Park Road, Suite A Cedar Grove, NJ 07009 (954) 661-7692 sales@accessrec.com accessrec.com

### **AFA HUB FLORIDA**

1800 Pembrook Drive #300 Orlando, FL 32810 (800) 967-3572 afahubfl@gmail.com afahubflorida.com

### **AHCA**

400 West Robinson Street, Suite S-309 Orlando, FL 32801 (407) 420-2517 ahcamedicaidhelpline@ahca.myflorida.com ahca.myflorida.com/medicaid/medicaid-policy-quality-and-operations/medicaid-operations/recipient-and-provider-assistance

# ANCHOR ACADEMIC CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

571 Haverty Court, Suite W Rockledge, FL 32955 (321) 458-2930 tmcever@anchoracademic.org anchoracademic.org

# ANGELS OF CARE PEDIATRIC HOME HEALTHCARE

1555 Howell Branch Road Winter Park, FL 32789 (717) 331-2048 jumpierrez@angelsofcare.com angelsofcare.com



# ANN'S ANGELS ADAPTIVE WATERSKI FOUNDATION, INC.

P.O. Box 1655 Winter Haven, FL 33882 (407) 342-6635 annsangelsawf@gmail.com annsangelsawf.org

### **ATLANTIC CARE SERVICES**

163 East Morse Boulevard, Suite 210 Winter Park, FL 32789 (407) 270-5501 info@atlanticcareservices.com atlanticcareservices.com

### A-TOWN COMMUNITY, INC.

6722 Riverside Bluffs Drive Riverview, FL 33578 (734) 740-2798 info@a-town.org a-town.org

### **AUDUBON GARDENS GROUP**

1504 Bennett Road Orlando, FL 32803 (407) 730-2298 info@audubongardensgroup.com audubongardensgroup.com

### **AUTISM LICENSE PLATE**

10250 Northwest 53rd Street Sunrise, FL 33351 (954) 746-9400 info@autismlicenseplate.com autismlicenseplate.com

### BAC

1845 Cogswell Street Rockledge, FL 32955 (321) 505-4573 info@bacemploy.com bacemploy.com

### **BAILES CONSULTING SERVICES**

P.O. Box 5571 Sarasota, FL 34237 (941) 753-3471 info@bailesconsulting.org bailesconsulting.org

### **BEDS BY GEORGE**

219 Caravan Drive Elkhart, IN 46514 (574) 333-2310 sales@bedsbygeorge.com bedsbygeorge.com

### **BEST BUDDIES INTERNATIONAL**

1001 North Orange Avenue, Suite 203 Orlando, FL 32801 (813) 461-3771 raschelpratt@bestbuddies.org bestbuddies.org

### **BEST BUY EDUCATION**

7601 Penn Avenue South Richfield, MN 55423 (800) 791-3902 steven.mccosh@bestbuy.com bestbuy.com/education

### **BRAIN INJURY FLORIDA**

19321 US Highway 19N, Suite 307 Clearwater, FL 33764 (317) 281-0424 darmington@braininjuryfl.org braininjuryfl.org

### **BROOKS LEBOEUF**

909 East Park Avenue Tallahassee, FL 32301 (850) 222-2000 dean@toomuchatstake.com toomuchatstake.com

### **CALMOSEPTINE**

16602 Burke Lane Huntington Beach, CA 92647 (714) 840-3405 info@calmoseptine.com calmoseptine.com

### **CARD FSU**

2312 Killearn Center Boulevard Building A Tallahassee, FL 32309 (352) 256-7363 czenko@fsu.edu

### **CAREGIVER SERVICES, INC.**

10451 Northwest 117 Avenue, Suite 110 Miami, FL 33178 (800) 282-6409 compliance@csicaregiver.com csicaregiver.com

# CENTRAL FLORIDA COMMUNITY ARTS

P.O. Box 720517 Orlando, FL 32872 (407) 937-1800 info@cfcarts.com cfcarts.com

# CHILDREN'S MEDICAL SERVICES OPERATED BY SUNSHINE HEALTH

P.O. Box 459089 Fort Lauderdale, FL 33345 (866) 796-0530 zhidy@sunshinehealth.com sunshinehealth.com

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### **DENTAQUEST**

11100 West Liberty Drive Milwaukee, WI 53224 (305) 894-8384 noel.rodriguez@greatdentalplans.com dentaquest.com

### **DISABILITY RIGHTS FLORIDA**

2473 Care Drive, Suite 200 Tallahassee, FL 32308 (850) 488-9071 disabilityrightsflorida.org

### **DIVISION OF BLIND SERVICES**

325 West Gaines Street, Suite 1114 Tallahassee, FL 32399 (813) 871-7190 mireya.hernandez@dbs.fldoe.org dbs.fldoe.org

### **DO UNTO OTHERS ASSISTANCE DOGS**

P.O. Box 951142 Lake Mary, FL 32795 (407) 221-0570 info@duoassistancedogs.org duoassistancedogs.org

### **EASTERSEALS**

2010 Crosby Way Winter Park, FL 32792 (407) 629-7881 info@fl.easterseals.com easterseals.com/florida

### **ETAC NORTH AMERICA**

2101 Nevada Bld, Suite A Charlotte, NC 28273 (704) 882-0668 sales.us@etac.com etac.com/en-us/us

### **EXCEPTIONAL VACATIONS**

9250 Glades Road, Suite 111 Boca Raton, FL 33434 (561) 852-0910 info@exceptionalservices.net exceptionaltrips.com

### **FAMILY CARE COUNCILS**

8900 140th Street North Seminole, FL 33776 (727) 741-1032 paujam7@aol.com

### **FDLRS**

3841 Reid Street Palatka, FL 32177 (386) 329-3800 paynes@nefec.org

### FIMC-VI

4716 West Montgomery Avenue Tampa, FL 33616 (813) 837-7826 information@fimcvi.org

A2200 University Center Florida State University Tallahassee, FL 32306 (850) 645-7593 lsi-finadmin@fsu.edu fin-network.org

### FLORIDA ALLIANCE FOR ASSISTIVE SERVICES & TECHNOLOGY (FAAST)

2145 Delta Boulevard, Suite 200 Tallahassee, FL 32303 (850) 487-3278 info@faast.org faast.org

### **FLORIDA CENTER FOR STUDENTS** WITH UNIQUE ABILITIES

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2310 Leonard Drive Seffner, FL 33584 (813) 817-1651 operationlightforce@gmail.com Operationlightforce.com

### **RESILIENT STAR BOOKS AND MORE**

(407) 574-0088 nicole.e.1019@gmail.com

### **SENSORY FRIENDS**

15985 Preserve Market Place Blvd, Unit 156 Odessa, FL 33556 (727) 946-1116 christine@sensorvfriends.com sensoryfriends.com

### THE HOLMES JOURNEY

(334) 440-9212 info@theholmesjourney.com theholmesjourney.com

### THE SHAPE OF NORMAL

13430 Southwest 78th Court Miami, FL 33156 (786) 239-2487 cathy.shields2@gmail.com cathyshieldswriter.com

### **WATERING CAN PRESS**

351 West 19th Street New York, NY 10011 (917) 348-4848 ellen@wateringcanpress.com





Some of the sessions at this year's event have been organized into "tracks" based on subject.

This key will help you to identify "tracked" sessions.



Sessions presented in Spanish, or with Spanish-speaking presenters, are printed in RED.

Sesiones que se presentan en español, o con el español que hablan los presentadores, están impresos en color ROJO.

Family changing rooms are located in Bayhill 23 and Gulf.

Please be advised that The Annual Family Café can create a loud, active environment that may be overstimulating to some individuals with sensory issues.



Get the whole program on your phone! Download the app!

You can also view the full agenda online at annual.familycafe.net/e/thefamilycafe/page/agenda

# FIR: 13, 2025

TOGETHER AS A TEAM!

1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Opening Session and Keynote Address Plaza International Ballroom

# Creating A Platform For Minds Of All Kinds



Margaux Joffe (she/her) is a Board Certified Cognitive Specialist and a passionate advocate for a more inclusive and accessible world. As the founder of Minds of All Kinds, Margaux has created a platform for neurodivergent individuals to learn, connect, and lead.

Formerly an award-winning producer, Margaux's journey took a pivotal turn at age 29 when she was diagnosed with ADHD. This experience led her to create the Kaleidoscope Society, a community empowering women with ADHD and challenging the stigma surrounding neurodiversity. She went on to lead disability inclusion initiatives at Yahoo and Verizon, launching the technology industry's first Neurodiversity Employee Resource Group (ERG), and spearheading the The Disability Collection, a landmark partnership with Getty Images and the National Disability Leadership Alliance to improve disability representation in the media.

As a speaker she has advocated at global forums like the United Nations and World Health Organization, and provided training for large companies like Nike, Dell Technologies, Hinge, Intuit and Edelman. She is also the creator and facilitator of ADHD Navigators, a transformational group program to help adults learn ADHD-friendly strategies for career success.

In 2023, LinkedIn recognized Margaux as a Top Voice in disability advocacy, reflecting her impact in the

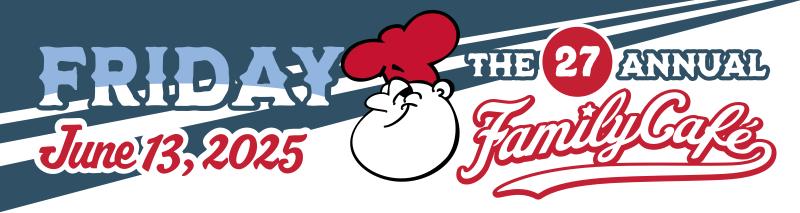


field. Her work has earned accolades from the United Nations Foundation, the D&AD Impact Awards, the Webby Awards, and the Susan M. Daniels Disability Mentoring Hall of Fame, among others. She has also been featured in major publications like *Forbes, Vogue,* and *The Hollywood Reporter.* Margaux is proud to serve on the Board of Directors for the American Association of People with Disabilities. She holds a BA from Duke University and certifications in Digital Accessibility, Cognitive Disabilities and Mental Health First Aid.

Currently based in Seattle, Washington, on the land of the Duwamish People, Margaux continues to drive change and inspire others through her work.



8:00 am to 6:00 pm	Registration Open, Registration Desk
9:00 am to 6:00 pm	Florida Community Care Discovery Hub, Blue Spring
9:00 am to 6:00 pm	Sunshine Health Community Connections Center, Rainbow Spring II
9:00 am to 6:30 pm	Exhibit Hall Open, Regency Ballroom
9:00 am to 6:30 pm	ABLE United Enrollment Hub, Silver Spring II
9:00 am to 6:30 pm	Book Fair, Regency Ballroom
9:00 am to 6:30 pm	The Pawsome Spot, Columbia 34
9:00 am to 6:30 pm	SportsAbility Sampler, Regency Ballroom
9:00 am to 7:30 pm	GiggleFIT Therapeutic Play Gym, Columbia 36
9:30 am to 6:00 pm	Henry's Friendly Farm Sensory Playroom sponsored by Sunshine Health, Orlando M
10:00 am to 4:00 pm	NSU College of Law Independent Living Kitchen, Rainbow Spring I
10:00 am to 6:00 pm	Club Café sponsored by Florida Community Care, Orlando L
11:00 am to 11:30 am	Performance by the Pyramid Players, Regency Rotunda
11:00 am to 11:30 am	Red Carpet Experience, Convention Level
11:30 am to 12:30 pm	CONCURRENT SESSIONS
11:30 am to 6:00 pm	Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually Impaired Interactive
	Learning Room, Celebration 12-13
11:30 am to 6:00 pm	PS/RtI Technology and Learning Connections Hands on Tech Expo, Florida B
12:00 pm to 1:00 pm	All About ABLE Accounts: Insights from Brand Ambassadors, Silver Spring II
1:00 pm to 1:30 pm	Performance by SofistyKat Strings, Plaza Pre-Function
1:30 pm to 3:00 pm	Opening Keynote Address by Margaux Joffe, Plaza International Ballroom
3:00 pm to 3:30 pm	Performance by the Pyramid Players, Regency Rotunda
3:00 pm to 3:30 pm	Red Carpet Experience, Convention Level
3:30 pm to 5:00 pm	Disability Rights Public Input Forum, Barrel Spring
3:30 pm to 4:30 pm	CONCURRENT SESSIONS
4:00 pm to 5:00 pm	How ABLE United Can Work for You, Silver Spring II
4:30 pm to 5:00 pm	Gatorland Animal Show: Live Alligators and Crocodiles, Regency Ballroom
4:30 pm to 5:00 pm	Performance by the Pyramid Players, Regency Rotunda
4:30 pm to 5:00 pm	Performance by the Brazilian Voices, Conference Level
4:30 pm to 5:00 pm	Red Carpet Experience, Convention Level
5:00 pm to 6:00 pm	CONCURRENT SESSIONS
6:00 pm to 6:30 pm	Performance by Milosz Gasior, Regency Rotunda
6:30 pm to 7:00 pm	Performance by St. John & Friends, Plaza Pre-Function
6:30 pm to 7:00 pm	Performance by Joy Street, Regency Bridge
7:00 pm to 8:30 pm	The Annual Summit on Disabilities, Plaza International Ballroom



# 11:30 am to 12:30 pm CONCURRENT SESSIONS

### 2025 Mid-Year Women's Wellness Experience: Revive & Thrive!

Coral Spring Friday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

This motivational session is designed to inspire women to continue to thrive being the best version of themselves as we have made it halfway through 2025. Come prepared to learn inspiring tips and encouraging insights on wellness to rejuvenate your spirit, mind, and body. The interactive gathering also enables you to share your experiences in an uplifting atmosphere and judgement-free zone. Recharge yourself in a refreshing environment, being revived with renewed strength and energy! We, as women, know the tremendous responsibilities that are placed upon us on a daily basis . . . I salute you all!! Hope to see you, and yessss . . . There will be surprises, giveaways, and goodies! Experience the moment as we celebrate womanhood and your selfless contributions to your families!!!

Malverna Streater Team Streater Seminars and Services (850) 661-1202 malvernal@yahoo.com

### Amor y Alegría en Armonía

Celebration 9 Friday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

El objetivo de esta conferencia es INSPIRAR y MOTIVAR a través de la experiencia de más de 24 años en los que la presentadora Lalita ha tenido la dicha de apoyar y orientar a PADRES y MADRES con Hijos Especiales recién diagnosticados así como adolescentes autistas y con otros diagnósticos para brindarles herramientas de aprendizaje de la forma más sencilla, divertida y dinámica para crear ARMONÍA e INTEGRACIÓN FAMILIAR.

Les compartimos con Amor la historia de una Madre que enseña a hacer equipo y que sabe aconsejar y aún más acompañar a ver donde hay perfección donde se cree que no.

Lalita Tooley es licenciada en educación y Orientadora Familiar, graduada de la maestría de Comunicación y Educación de la Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona en España.

Al nacer su primer hijo se dedicó a sacarlo adelante a pesar de todos los diagnósticos que ponían en riesgo la vida del pequeño Connor, hoy a sus 21 años es un muchacho sano, deportista y feliz

Los esperamos a todos ustedes padres y madres que tiene el deseo de sacar a sus hijos adelante. Toda la Familia es bienvenida.

Lalita Tooley

# Black Families With Children Who Have a Disability: Learn How To Create Positive Relationships With Siblings While Sharing Responsibilities

Bayhill 29-30 Friday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Learn ways to build sibling relationships and form bonds with children with disabilities. Share roles and responsibilities with non-disabled siblings as current and future caregivers of siblings with disabilities.

Sabrita Thurman-Newby
The Ultimate Decision: A Program for New Directions
(850) 241-4181
sdnewby@gmail.com

### **Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS) General Updates**

Plaza International Ballroom Friday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

This presentation provides BEESS general updates that support families in learning more about Exceptional Student Education.

Patricia Bodiford
Florida Department of Education Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services patricia.bodiford@fldoe.org





### **Common Youth Mental Health Disorders, Signs and Symptoms**

Bayhill 27 Friday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Join us to discuss signs and symptoms of general mental health issues, then take a deeper look into common youth mental health disorders such as anxiety, depression, substance use, etc., including how to de-escalate behaviors, and how to communicate and support someone going through a crisis. Do you know the signs and symptoms, the risk factors, and protective factors of mental health? Did you know that suicide is the second leading cause of death in youth? Half of all chronic mental illness begins by age 14; three-quarters by age 24. Despite effective treatment, there are long delays, sometimes decades, between the first appearance of symptoms and when youth get help. Mental illness is a diagnosable illness that affects a person's thinking, emotional state and behavior, and disrupts the person's ability to work or attend school, carry out daily activities, and engage in satisfying relationships. It is estimated that as many as 1 out of 5 children experience a mental disorder each year, and an estimated \$247 billion is spent each year on treatment and management of childhood mental disorders.

Jill Hill Partnership for Child Health (904) 376-5983 JillH@pchjax.org

### **Down Syndrome Regression Disorder: Medical Updates and Strategies for Families**

Bayhill 22

Friday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

This session is specifically designed for families with first-hand experience of Down Syndrome Regression Disorder (DSRD), a condition in which a small percentage of adolescents and young adults with Down syndrome experience a significant loss of previously acquired skills. During this session families will learn how one family navigates the challenges of DSRD, updated medical guidelines for diagnosis and treatment, and strategies to engage their loved one with DSRD in meaningful activities of daily living and community life. This sharing session is moderated by Dr. Keri Rodgers, complex care coordinator, researcher, licensed educator, and LifeCourse Ambassador, and member of the Down Syndrome Medical Interest Group; and Elizabeth Gibson, parent of an adult with long-standing DSRD. Participants will receive handouts with resources for learning more about DSRD and online support group information.

Keri Rodgers

Elizabeth Gibson



### **Embrace, Empower, Cultivate: Fostering Independence in Children**

Bayhill 17 Friday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

This workshop examines the importance of encouraging independence in a child with special needs. The workshop also discusses how hard it can be for parents to step back and offer increasing levels of freedom to the child to allow the child to develop that independence. Finally, the session offers some ideas for parents in learning how to let go in a constructive fashion.

Mark Keith
Resource Materials and Technology Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (904) 827-2731
mark.keith@rmtcdhh.org

### Estrategias de autorregulación: ¿Cómo ayudar a mi hijo(a) con autismo?

Bayhill 28 Friday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Esta presentación presenta las diferencias únicas en menores diagnosticados con Trastorno del Espectro Autista (TEA). Explora los retos de las personas diagnosticadas con TEA en sus intentos de autorregulación. Las presentadora proveerá programas y técnicas basadas en evidencia para apoyar a menores con TEA en el desarrollo de destrezas de autorregulación.

Yazmin Castellano Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (813) 974-0335 ycastellano@usf.edu



### | Fair Housing Rights for People with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities

Bayhill 25 Friday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Join us for an informative presentation designed for families with children who have intellectual or developmental disabilities. This session will cover essential rights and protections under the Fair Housing Act, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to live in a community like anyone else. During this presentation, you will learn about: Requesting changes in housing rules

to accommodate disabilities; Installing additional equipment to support a person with a disability; and Preventing the loss of a home due to disability-related behaviors. We will guide you through understanding your rights, how to ask for accommodations, and the steps to prevent evictions or violations. This is a valuable opportunity to empower yourself with knowledge and ensure a supportive living environment for your loved ones.

Matt Dietz Nova Southeastern University College of Law (954) 262-6492 mdietz@nova.edu

### **Grade Level Instruction Using Access Points - Alternate Academic Achievment Standards (AP-AAAS)**

Celebration 7

Friday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

This presentation will provide a comprehensive outline of the structure and alignment of Access Points to the state academic standards, after a student is found eligible for instruction on Access Points. Additionally, it will illustrate how instruction in Access Points is implemented across all academic settings and showcase the valuable resources and supports available on the Access Project's website.

Jeff Pruitt Access Project



### **Health, Wellness, and Self-Care**

Manatee Spring I Friday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Hello my name is Micah McCoy. I am assistant principal Atlantis Academy (West Palm Beach). I also teach PE and coach. I have a daughter on the autism spectrum. She is 15. This session will cover the topic of benefits of physical education with autism, including the benefits of eating properly, exercise, rest and screen time, as well as the benefits of self-care, even for caregivers. I have been in this field for 18 years. As a para, physical education teacher, behavior team member, and assistant principal.

Micah McCoy Atlantis Academy

### **How Music Therapy Supports Sensory Integration**

Bayhill 33 Friday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Beachside Music Lessons & Therapy invites you to our presentation to learn more about "How Music Therapy Supports Sensory Integration" where we will explore how music therapy can help individuals with sensory processing challenges manage over-stimulation and improve body awareness. This presentation covers the use of steady rhythmic patterns for sensory regulation, sensory-friendly instruments like rainsticks and ocean drums to engage multiple senses, and how volume, tempo, and tone can influence sensory responses. Attendees will experience hands-on demonstrations, including an ocean drum activity and a body awareness rhythmic tapping exercise, concluding with a Q&A session to inspire practical use of these strategies in daily life. Beachside Music has proudly served the community for over 8 years, offering music lessons, music therapy, and group classes in their Daytona Beach and Deland studios, as well as online. Services are accessible through Step Up Scholarships, Sunshine Health Insurance, Children's Medical Services (CMS) Insurance, and private pay options, ensuring families can access quality music education and therapy.

Ashlee Hughes Beachside Music Lessons & Therapy (386) 320-7762 ashlee@beachsidemusiclessons.com Eliott Hughes Beachside Music Lessons & Therapy

### **How to Achieve your Goals For People with Autism and Down Syndrome**

Celebration 2 Friday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Come and meet Marlynne Stutzman, an elite athlete who was the first autistic female to run the Boston Marathon and the Iron Man in Kona, Hawaii in one year. She is an artist, a compelling speaker, and an advocate for people with intellectual disabilities. She is active in Special Olympics as an Athlete Leader, a Global Messenger, and a Health Messenger. She will share with you how, with determination, practice, and having a goal, a person with Autism or Down Syndrome can be successful. I want people to know anything is possible if you set your mind to it.

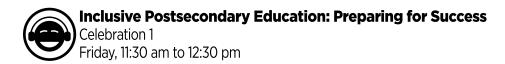
Marlynne Stutzman Special Olympics Florida (727) 364-7756 marlynnestutzman@gmail.com John Yerke Special Olympics Florida (727) 255-4618 jyerke3@gmail.com

### How to Write Your Book, Your Story to Impact the World

Bayhill 26 Friday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

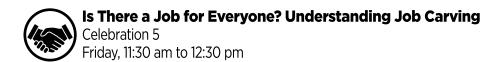
As a best selling author of many books, the book about our Down Syndrome son and an amazing miracle with him has touched many hearts. I have a passion to help other people who have a story worth telling or a message worth getting out to the world. I want to help those with special needs and parents like me turn their story, experience, expertise or message into a book and teach them keys to make that book a best seller.

Richard Mull Operation Light Force (813) 817-1651 operationlightforce@gmail.com



This presentation explores the vital steps and strategies for preparing individuals with intellectual disabilities for postsecondary education and fostering inclusive college experiences. Attendees will learn about the importance of early preparation, including academic, social, and self-advocacy skills. The session will also highlight programs, resources, and support systems that promote meaningful inclusion in higher education settings. By addressing challenges and celebrating success stories, this presentation aims to empower educators, families, and students to create pathways for individuals with intellectual disabilities to thrive in postsecondary education and beyond.

Jayme Joslyn UMatter at USF St. Petersburg (727) 452-8564 jaymej@usf.edu



The session will provide a comprehensive exploration of the concept of job carving, a practice that tailors job roles to the

unique strengths and abilities of individuals with disabilities. This session is designed to educate individuals with disabilities and their families about how job carving can create meaningful and productive employment opportunities, and how it benefits both employees and employers by fostering inclusion and enhancing workplace diversity. Through real-world examples and actionable strategies, attendees will gain a deeper understanding of how customized employment can open doors to previously untapped opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Christine Nammour MacDonald Training Center (813) 870-1300 cnammour@macdonaldcenter.org Sharon Foster **MacDonald Training Center** (813) 870-1300 SFoster@macdonaldcenter.org



### Lab: Story Boxes for Children with Visual or Dual Sensory Impairment

Celebration 12-13 Friday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Children with visual impairments learn best through concrete, hands-on experiences with real objects. A variety of homemade books using real objects in place of or in addition to pictures can be used in the emergent literacy process to bring meaning to everyday concepts. Join us in this exciting, interactive literacy experience.

Tiffany Conrad Sue Glaser Cheri Hart Andrea Wallace Florida Instructional Materials Florida Instructional Materials Florida Instructional Materials Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually Impaired Center for the Visually Impaired Center for the Visually Impaired Center for the Visually Impaired

### **Medical Foster Care Program Overview**

Bayhill 21

Friday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Are you looking for a place to support your loved one as they get older? What would happen to your loved one if you were no longer able to be a full-time caregiver? A group home may not be a desired solution, but sometimes it is a necessary one.

Mary Pizzurro Florida Department of Health (813) 957-7735 maria.pizzurro@flhealth.gov



### Milita Bayhil Friday

### Military Families and Building Relationships with Community Partners

Bayhill 20 Friday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Establishing a strong partnership between the School Liaison Program, local school districts, and community partners will greatly benefit military families with special needs. The collaboration between MacDill AFB, local school districts, and community organizations serves as a remarkable example of how effective partnerships can build strong, resilient, military-connected students by ensuring a seamless transition for children in special education.

Venetia Waters Military & Family Readiness Center (813) 828-0146 venetia.waters@us.af.mil

### Navigating the Big Move from Pediatric to Adult Health Care

Celebration 16 Friday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

An important step is often left out of high school transition planning: The plans for moving from pediatric to adult health care services. Families and Youth: Is health care transition in your IEP or 504 Plan? Is your health care team helping you get ready for this important change? Professionals: Are you supporting youth and families with health care transition? The Florida Department of Health's Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs Program provides support for this vital process. Learn more about strategies and resources to transition into adult health care services.

Linda Starnes
Florida Department of Health, Children's Medical
Services, Title V Children and Youth with Special
Healthcare Needs Program
(407) 858-5550
Linda.Starnes@flhealth.gov

Trecia Morris
Florida Department of Health, Children's Medical
Services, Title V Children and Youth with Special
Healthcare Needs Program
(407) 858-5572
Trecia.Morris@flhealth.gov

### **Parenting Through a Neurodevelopmental Lens**

Bayhill 18 Friday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Learn how alcohol and other drugs affect the developing brain and cause distinct behaviors in individuals. Learn the importance of approaching these behaviors through a brain-based, trauma-informed lens, reducing frustration and expanding options for therapeutic interventions. As caregivers, learn effective strategies and how to utilize them to empower those diagnosed with neurodevelopmental conditions such as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, ADHD, and Autism, among others. Become part of the solution to creating a more peaceful environment for home and beyond.

Kristal Pollack The Florida Center Pam Carver The Florida Center





### Planning for Two Futures: Retirement and Lifelong Care for Your Child

Celebration 6 Friday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Are you overwhelmed at the thought of preparing for your retirement while ensuring that your child with a disability can live a purposeful and joyful life? Retirement planning takes on a unique complexity when you are planning for the lifetime care of a child with a disability. In this comprehensive session, we'll explore strategies to secure both your future and theirs. Key topics include: 1. Secure 2.0 changes 2. Funding options: Roth vs. Traditional IRA, Pensions, and Life Insurance 3. Social Security claiming strategies with potential DAC benefits 4. Medicaid, Medicare, and Medicaid Waivers.

Barbara Misener Tax Prep and Planning, LLC (352) 672-8925 bjmisener@yahoo.com

### **Secondary Transition and High School Graduation Requirements for Students with Disabilities**

Celebration 8

Friday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

This presentation will review the Florida high school graduation requirement pathways, including those for students with disabilities. Additionally, the requirements of secondary transition planning will be outlined with an overview of recent legislative updates that impact students.

Noal Weiland Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services Kim Brumage Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services



# **Special Needs Trust Services - Helping Address the Needs of Individuals Living with a Disability**

Celebration 3-4 Friday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

This session will help attendees to understand the demand and need for special needs trust (SNT) services. It will help to identify the key features of these trusts and share expenses that are potentially covered by SNTs. We will explain how we can help and will explore the statistics, our approach, and how families can reach out to us.

Myrian Garrett Wells Fargo Special Needs Trust Services (737) 218-5142 myrian.garrett@wellsfargo.com



# The Benefits of an Effective Early Intervention Infant/Toddler - Parent Group: From a Listening and Spoken Language (LSL) Perspective

Bayhill 31-32 Friday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

The Listening and Spoken Language (LSL) approach is a specialized early intervention method designed to support caregivers who have chosen to provide their children access to sound through hearing aids, cochlear implants, or bone conduction devices. By granting the brain ample access to sound, the LSL approach fosters the development of auditory pathways, which in turn supports the emergence of spoken language. Central to this approach is the recognition of parents

and caregivers as a child's first and most important teachers. In the LSL framework, professionals guide and coach families by equipping them with tools and strategies to facilitate their child's growth in auditory, speech, and language development. While there is extensive evidence-based research on parent involvement, coaching, and early intervention across fields like child development and addressing developmental delays, there is a notable gap in the literature examining these principles in a group setting from the perspective of the LSL approach. This research study seeks to address this gap by exploring the following key questions: What constitutes an effective early intervention (LSL) group? What are the benefits of an effective early intervention infant/toddler parent (LSL) group? Through this study, we aim to provide actionable insights into how group-based LSL interventions can empower families and optimize developmental outcomes for children with hearing loss.

Aisha Doggette Clarke Schools For Hearing and Speech Jacksonville (904) 880-9001 adoggette@clarkeschools.org



### Title III of the Americans with Disabilites Act - How to Enforce It at No Cost to You

Celebration 14-15 Friday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act applies to places of public accommodation such as hotels, restaurants, grocery stores, shopping malls, parks, and any other places open to the public. It provides various requirements for things such as bathrooms, parking, paths of travel, changes in level, etc., so that such places are accessible to and usable by disabled individuals. Unfortunately, not everyone complies with these rules. Mr. Rotbart will discuss how to enforce the ADA through the federal courts at absolutely no charge to the disabled individual.

Brandon Rotbart Law Office of Brandon A. Rotbart, P.A. (305) 350-7400 rotbart@rotbartlaw.com



## Understanding Your Options: Supported Decisionmaking, Guardianship, and More

Disability Rights Florida Celebration 10 Friday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

This presentation will delve into the specifics of Supported Decisionmaking and how it can be used as an effective alternative to guardianship, as well as compare SDM to guardianship, guardian advocacy, power of attorney, and a healthcare surrogate so that individuals with disabilities and their families can explore all of the options that are available to them as they transition into adulthood. There will also be an opportunity for attendees to ask questions so that they will be able to make the best decision for themselves and their families.

Morgan Patipa Disability Rights Florida (850) 488-9071 morganp@disabilityrightsflorida.org **11:30 am to 6:00 pm** Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually Impaired Interactive Learning Room,

Celebration 12-13

11:30 am to 6:00 pm
12:00 pm to 1:00 pm
12:00 pm to 1:30 pm
PS/Rtl Technology and Learning Connections Hands on Tech Expo, Florida B
All About ABLE Accounts: Insights from Brand Ambassadors, Silver Spring II
Performance by SofistyKat Strings, Plaza Pre-Function

1:30 pm to 3:00 pm Opening Keynote Address by Margaux Joffe, Plaza International Ballroom

**3:00 pm to 3:30 pm** Performance by the Pyramid Players, Regency Rotunda

**3:00 pm to 3:30 pm** Red Carpet Experience, Convention Level



### **Disability Rights Public Input Forum**

Barrel Spring Friday, 3:30 pm to 5:00 pm

Disability Rights Florida wants to hear from you about the issues that matter most to the disability community. Every year, we review our goals and priorities for legal and advocacy work, and we believe these decisions should be guided by the experiences of individuals with disabilities and their families. Join members of our staff, Board of Directors, and the PAIMI Advisory Council, our mental health advisory group, to share your insights on issues affecting all types of disabilities, including physical, intellectual, psychiatric, developmental, neurological, and mental health disabilities. Your feedback can help us prioritize topics such as community integration, housing, accessible emergency planning, education, abuse and neglect, mental health services, and more. By participating, you'll also have a chance to win a \$50 gift card. Help us advocate more effectively for your rights. Your voice matters!

Robin Kocher Disability Rights Florida robink@disabilityrightsflorida.org

# 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm CONCURRENT SESSIONS



### A Recipe for Growing Up: Do You Have All the Ingredients?

Plaza International Ballroom Friday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Just like cooking a great meal, successful transition planning takes a mix of the right ingredients: Youth voice, family supports, clear goals, and teamwork. This lively panel brings together a seasoned parent (the home chef), a Transition Specialist (the sous-chef), an employment expert (the pastry chef), and adult self-advocates (the rising stars of the kitchen). They will share their recommendations for cooking up a plan to navigate from youth to adulthood. Come to this inaugural Family Café "Hot Plate" Panel, to get the dish on strategies and resources for blending education, healthcare, and life skills development into a holistic recipe on transition planning.

Linda Starnes Florida Department of Health, Children's Medical Services, Title V Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs Program (407) 858-5550 Linda.Starnes@flhealth.gov

Shevie Barnes Florida Youth Council shevie@floridayouthcouncil.org

Lisa Friedman-Chavez Project 10: Transition Education Network Delania Parrish Fearless Independence, LLC Delaina@fearlessindependence.com

Mac Starnes



This session will feature an adaptive dance class, or an inclusive dance class, designed to accommodate individuals with conditions like autism, ADHD, dyslexia, or other neurodivergences, providing a supportive environment where they can explore movement and creativity while receiving tailored support based on their individual needs.

Nikki Hutchinson
Destiny Dance Company
(352) 234-0332
nikkihutchinson61@gmail.com



### **Artificial Intelligence and Agriculture: Opportunities for Engagement**

Celebration 9 Friday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

The potential of technology, particularly artificial intelligence (AI), in revolutionizing opportunities in the agricultural field for people with disabilities is impactful. AI fosters critical thinking, problem-solving, and digital literacy to empower people to become creators, not just consumers, of technology. At the same time, the misconceptions and lack of knowledge of what AI entails, how to utilize it, and how to be comfortable in the space of AI is daunting. Through awareness of AI and putting the focus on what AI can accomplish in the disability community, people can be more comfortable to explore the benefits of AI in agriculture. This workshop will introduce AI through engaging, hands-on activities that align with real-world challenges in agriculture, workforce development, and accessibility for people with disabilities. Additionally, this workshop will explore the integration of AI with virtual reality (VR) and other emerging technologies to provide immersive and personalized experiences for attendees.

Vanessa Spero UF/IFAS Extension, Florida 4-H (321) 615-7323 vspero@ufl.edu Brent Broaddus Florida 4-H

### **Becoming a Champion for Supporting My Child's Education in the LRE (Spanish)**

Bayhill 29-30 Friday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

As parents and caregivers, we might wonder how to further support our child's educational journey in the least restrictive environment. This session will provide tips on strategies we can implement at home to generalize at school. Implementing these strategies can help create a supportive and consistent environment that bridges home and school, making it easier for your child to thrive in both settings.

Como padres y cuidadores, podemos preguntarnos cómo podemos apoyar aún más el viaje educativo de nuestro hijo/a en el entorno menos restrictivo. Esta sesión proporcionará consejos sobre estrategias que podemos implementar en casa para generalizar en la escuela. Implementar estas estrategias puede ayudar a crear un entorno de apoyo y coherente que conecte el hogar y la escuela, facilitando que tu hijo/a prospere en ambos entornos.

Elaine Centeno FIN (850) 645-7593 ecenteno@contactfin.com Jacqueline Delgado FIN jdelgado@contactfin.com

### **Creating a Road Map to Navigate the Uncharted Territories of Disability with Medical Providers**

Bayhill 25

Friday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Have you ever longed for a road map to help you navigate the "uncharted territories" of disability with medical providers? In this presentation, complex care coordinator Dr. Keri Rodgers and parent Elizabeth Gibson team up to share how they collaborate to achieve positive outcomes in medical interactions. Participants will learn how to build a health and medical binder for their loved one, use simple tools to track changes in health, create a one-page personal profile and communication passport, and find up-to-date reliable medical information to learn about their loved one's medical conditions. This session is facilitated by Dr. Keri Rodgers, complex care coordinator, researcher, licensed educator, and LifeCourse Ambassador, and member of the Down Syndrome Medical Interest Group; and Elizabeth Gibson, parent of a self-advocate with long-standing DSRD. Participants will receive handouts outlining how to use each of the resources discussed during the session.

Elizabeth Gibson

Keri Rodgers



### **Disability Dadvocates**

Bayhill 17 Friday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Disability Dadvocates is an innovative program by Posability, dedicated to empowering fathers who are caregivers and advocates for their children with disabilities. Our mission is to provide a supportive community where dads can connect, share experiences, and access tailored resources that help them navigate the unique challenges of raising a child with disabilities. This presentation will offer insights into our mission and story, practical tools and resources, and include a Q&A session to address specific questions. Join us to learn how Disability Dadvocates is redefining fatherhood in the context of disability, fostering inclusivity, and supporting families in meaningful ways.

Wayne Cordova Posability, Inc. (352) 593-0439 wayne@posability.life



## **Disaster Recovery Support for the Disabled Community**

Celebration 10 Friday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

This My Needs Network initiative is a collaborative effort that integrates AI technology, community-based participatory research methodology, and organizational partnerships to improve disaster recovery efforts for people with disabilities. The purpose of the Disaster Recovery Support System is to improve access to emergency resources and services for individuals and families with disabilities during natural disasters.

In this presentation we will provide an overview of our early designs and plans for the Disaster Recovery Support system. During the second half of the presentation, we invite attendees to participate in our community input forum so that we can learn about your experiences navigating disaster situations with disability considerations. By sharing your family's needs, challenges, and priorities, you'll directly influence how this system develops.

Join us to learn about our preliminary service model and how community feedback will lead to the design and build of a solution that truly addresses the unique emergency needs of families living with disabilities during times of natural disasters.

Mark Fafard University of Florida, College of Medicine-Jacksonville (My Needs Network) (904) 588-2855 mark.fafard@jax.ufl.edu

### **Empowering Futures: The Critical Role of Intensive Pediatric Physical Therapy in Enhancing Outcomes**

Celebration 7 Friday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

In this presentation, we will explore the significance of intensive pediatric physical therapy and its impact on improving health outcomes for children with various conditions. We will define what intensive pediatric physical therapy entails, including the frequency, duration, and types of interventions typically employed. We will review real-life case studies showcasing children who have benefited from intensive physical therapy, illustrating the potential for recovery and improved quality of life. The presentation will conclude with a summary of key points and a call to action for healthcare providers, families, and policymakers to prioritize access to intensive pediatric physical therapy services.

Brandon Tejeda Pediatric Adventure Therapy, LLC



### **Estate Planning - Empower Your Family with Confidence**

Celebration 3-4 Friday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

This session will be an estate planning presentation focused on families with minor children and younger adults, detailing the most important aspects of protecting their family from an untimely death of either one, or both parents. An emphasis will also be placed on how to smartly leverage life insurance as an estate funding tool for loved ones, including positive features of different types of insurance along with pitfalls to avoid.

Chris Hunter
The Pienkosz Financial Group of Wells Fargo Advisors
(407) 649-6026
Chris.Hunter@WFA.com

Greg Pienkosz The Pienkosz Financial Group of Wells Fargo Advisors

### **Executive Functioning**

Bayhill 28 Friday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

In cognitive science and neuropsychology, executive functions are a set of cognitive processes that are necessary for the cognitive control of behavior, selecting and successfully monitoring behaviors that facilitate the attainment of chosen goals. Executive function refers to mental processes (executive functioning skills) that help you set and carry out goals. You use these skills to solve problems, make plans, and manage emotions. Research suggests strong executive functioning skills make a difference in your mental and physical health and quality of life. Executive function and self-regulation skills are the mental processes that enable us to plan, focus attention, remember instructions, and juggle multiple tasks successfully. Put simply, these are "higher-order" thinking patterns and skills that allow us to live. When we make plans, organize, pay attention, and follow directions and instructions at home, school, and work, or on the playground, we are using our execution function skills. What happens if you have Executive Dysfunction? It might be hard for you to plan, organize, strategize, pay attention to details, and manage your time. Executive dysfunction disorder isn't just being forgetful or disorganized occasionally. It's a long-term condition that affects your everyday life. For example, you might have trouble doing tasks that have steps, such as cooking a meal or finishing work or school project. It's not a matter of how smart you are or how much effort you put in; it's a disconnect in your brain's ability to coordinate and carry out tasks. Learn about Executive Dys/Functioning, its symptoms, and skills that help control behaviors to achieve goals. Learn how they impact learning and tips for support.

Jill Hill Partnership for Child Health (904) 376-5983 JillH@pchjax.org



Legislation that passed regarding individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities during the 2025 Legislative session will be discussed. The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council (FDDC) 2025 platform and work that was done with stakeholders regarding Our Care Matters will be highlighted. Tips on how to educate legislators will be outlined in preparation for 2026, including covering the FDDC's updated Developmental Disabilities (DD) Awareness Toolkit which includes a "How to hold a local DD Awareness Day" section. Opportunities will also be shared regarding advocacy and leadership on the local and state level, spotlighting the FDDC's Advocacy and Leadership Opportunities Guide.

Margaret Hooper Florida Developmental Disabilities Council (800) 580-7801 margaretd@fddc.org Kristin Vandagriff
Florida Developmental Disabilities Council (FDDC)
(800) 580-7801
kristinv@fddc.org



# **Life Care Planning: Making the Future More Secure for Your Dependent with Special Needs**Bayhill 21 Friday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

This workshop will discuss what a life care plan is, and the steps recommended to create one for a loved one with special needs. As a caregiver of a dependent with special needs, the single most important issue on your mind, regardless of the age of the dependent, is what will happen to my dependent after I'm gone. There are some needs that will always be present and they must be carefully considered and planned for appropriately. This workshop will address such critical issues as protecting government benefit eligibility for supplemental security income (SSI) and Medicaid, creating special needs trusts, the importance of a will, guardianship, financial strategies including ABLE accounts and preparing letters of intent. You will learn about the comprehensive steps, available resources, and necessary tools to help develop your personal agenda. Following the planning stages can help insure the type of care an quality of life for your loved one s well being today and tomorrow.

Douglas Vogel MassMutual Special Care (973) 303-7856 dvogel@financialguide.com



# Making Auditory Processing Therapy Fun: Turn Learning into Play!

Celebration 5 Friday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Want to transform your child's therapy sessions from "have to" into "want to"? Join us to discover how everyday games and activities can become powerful tools for improving auditory processing skills! This presentation will showcase creative, engaging ways to build listening skills through music, movement, and play-based activities that you can easily do at home. Learn how to turn simple games into therapeutic opportunities, use technology in entertaining ways with the best auditory apps, and create a home environment where learning feels like playing. We'll share practical strategies that have children asking for "just one more" activity while developing crucial auditory skills for ages three and up. Perfect for parents and caregivers looking to make therapy practice a highlight of their child's day.

Rachel Cohen ListenHEAR (239) 444-7393 rachel@listenhear.net

### **Multi-Media Art for Children with Visual or Dual Sensory Impairment**

Celebration 12-13 Friday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Isn't art just an elective? No way! Come learn about the many benefits for children who participate in the fine and recreational arts. Find out how to adapt this wonder-filled subject to make it accessible, even with vision loss.

Tiffany Conrad

Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually Impaired

### Now that I Am 30, What Happens from Here?

Florida C

Friday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

This session is for parents, and also for those over 30 that have a disability and feel like they're alone in this journey. It will remind them that they are not alone, and give parents a chance to talk and discuss the trials and roads that they go though. We will share all of our experiences and trials and maybe help someone who is going though the experience and help others. This will also be a chance for us to meet others and make new friendships. Activities for adults with disabilities are few and far between, but with us brainstorming we may be able to to create and build relationships with others. Remember, it takes a village to make things work.

 Cindy Edwards
 Tina Lundy
 Alma Johnson

 (941) 518-4090
 (941) 720-8586
 (941) 726-8755

### **Parentally-Placed Private School Students**

Celebration 8

Friday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

This session will guide parents and families on the responsibilities of parentally-placed private school students under IDEA. Topics include child find obligations, service plans vs. IEPs, and proportionate share funding. Participants will also learn best practices for collaborating with private and public schools while addressing emerging compliance issues and dispute resolution options.

Patricia Bodiford Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (850) 245-9394 Casey Grove Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services

# Parenting 'Invisible' Autism: She Doesn't Look Autistic, But We Swear She Is - Understanding, Supporting, and Guiding Girls on the Spectrum

Bayhill 22

Friday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Patricia.Bodiford@fldoe.org

Join us for a lively and insightful presentation about the challenges girls on the autism spectrum face, especially when they don't "fit the mold." A parent of a young girl with autism shares her personal journey (with a healthy dose of humor) through the maze of diagnosis, services, and the occasional "Wait, she doesn't look autistic?" Meanwhile, an autism specialist

dishes out practical tips for supporting girls in schools and communities, all while keeping things light and relatable. Expect plenty of laughs, real talk, and actionable resources to help create more understanding and inclusive environments for our neurodiverse girls. This presentation is targeted at parents, focusing on the unique challenges faced by girls on the autism spectrum, especially when their traits don't align with stereotypical perceptions of autism. It offers resources for parents, teachers, and community members.

Olivia Conrad
That! Speech and Language Services LLC

Megan Lietzau

Center for Autism and Related Disabilities

#### Pink Art Party | She Is A Miracle!

Coral Spring Friday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

The Pink Art Party "Miracle" masterclass will help women participants to consider how they are a supernatural phenomenon that has defied the odds. This session will help each person to count their blessings one-by-one and to highlight the supernatural occurrence of an unexplained wonder. Pink Art Party phenomenal women will learn how to see the dark and light as a contrast between what could have occurred versus the power and beauty of what currently exists.

Charmaine Jennings Chosen Life Specialists, LLC (813) 927-0562 ChosenLifeSpecialists@Gmail.com LaKeesha Hines Fire Starter Coaching Services, LLC 727 213-8247 IgniteltRight@Gmail.com

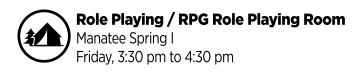
#### Raise a Capable Kid Regardless of Diagnosis or Challenge

Celebration 2 Friday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

No two kids are the same, but research shows that parents who raise their child to be capable share some game-changing habits! Parent, educator, and author, Dr. Deborah Winking introduces 12 research-based Habits™ that will help you raise your child with maximum agency and independence. She offers compelling real-life stories and explains the neuroscience underlying each habit. "Capable" speaks first to parents, but equally to teachers, therapists, and doctors who support children or young adults who identify as neurodivergent or disabled. All participants will leave with practical strategies for making the Habits™ their own. In order for the nearly 20 percent of school-aged children who identify as neurodivergent or disabled to truly thrive, we need a "mind meld" between parents, caregivers, educators, therapists and school leaders. Despite our best efforts, parents and "experts" too often are talking past each other and our kids are the ones who lose out. Participants will: 1) be introduced to the 12 habits that parents raising capable kids share, 2) learn how "experts" and parents can partner to ensure that our kids thrive in inclusive environments, and 3) discover how intentionality is the most important parental "superpower."

Deborah Contino Irish Bilingual Elementary School (970) 686-7361 debwinking@outlook.com





Dungeon Master John Ferrone returns to host a Role Playing Room where players and other DM's can come and explore their favorite realms. Whether it's D+D, Middle-earth Role Playing, or some other game system, show up and join in the fun. No experience necessary, although youth under 10 may need assistance. Feel free to come in costume if you'd like. Bring your dice, too, and receive a set of dungeon dice. If you're a Dungeon Master or Game Master, you can pull together a group and take them through an adventure. And if you're a Player Character, bring your favorite Character and jump into an adventure. John Ferrone will conduct a dungeon crawl, too. Come and have a blast!

John Ferrone Ferrone Associates (402) 462-0244 jferrone@ferroneassociates.com



## Social Security Presents: Navigating Social Security Disability (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Work Incentives

Celebration 6 Friday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Social Security has provided financial protection for our nation's people for nearly 90 years. Chances are, you either receive Social Security benefits or know someone who does. With retirement, disability, and survivors benefits, Social Security is one of the most successful anti-poverty programs in our nation's history. We are passionate about helping you by delivering financial support, providing superior customer service, and ensuring the security of your information - helping you secure today and tomorrow. This informational session will focus on both Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Work Incentives. Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) employment support provisions assist beneficiaries in moving from benefit dependence, while Supplemental Security Income (SSI) employment support provisions assist beneficiaries in moving from benefit dependency to independence. Work incentives, designed to help recipients enter, re-enter, or stay in the workforce by protecting their eligibility for cash payments and/or healthcare, will also be discussed.

Tina Williams Danielle West-Lane Angela Love Carolyn Smith
Social Security Administration Social Security Administration Social Security Administration



#### **Specialized Mental Health Counseling for Dual Diagnosed Individuals**

Bayhill 27 Friday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Mental health is an essential aspect of our overall health, even more so for those with special needs. Many practitioners are not equipped to assist those that are dual diagnosed. A significant amount of the special needs population is only referred to behavior therapy services but may not be aware of the benefits of specialized mental health counseling. This presentation will help with an understanding of mental health counseling and behavioral therapy, especially when the two services are used in conjunction for greater success. We will also learn about the different funding sources available to cover these services.

Nichole Dawkins Cornerstone Supports and Consulting, LLC (407) 860-0639 NDawkins@CornerstonegroupCF.com Fredericka Wilfong Cornerstone Supports and Consulting, LLC (407) 860-0639 FWilfong@Cornerstonegroupcf.com

#### Steps to Take When A Disabled Person is Injured, Neglected, or Abused

Bayhill 18

Friday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Unfortunately, a person with disabilities is 4 times more likely to be injured or killed as a result of someone else's neglect or abuse than the rest of the population. Parents, family members, and wards, need to know what steps to take when this occurs. The session will include a discussion of the legal protections and rights that exist for people with disabilities, and what steps to take when a disabled person is injured, neglected, or abused.

Dean LeBoeuf Brooks LeBoeuf (850) 222-2000 Dean@Toomuchatstake.com Scott Gwartney
Brooks LeBoeuf
(850) 222-2000
Scott@Toomuchatstake.com



# **Supporting Military Families with Special Needs - State Support vs. Department of Defense Support**

Bayhill 20 Friday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Join us for an insightful panel discussion exploring the differences between state and Department of Defense (DoD) programs that support military families with special needs. This panel will feature experts from both state and federal agencies who will share their knowledge and experiences in providing resources and services to military families. Families will receive tips and strategies to effectively utilize state and DoD support programs and engage in discussions with panel experts.

Eric Sherman Military Families with Special Needs Network (305) 535-0914 scott@7-dippity.com



#### **Surviving Emergencies: Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery 101**

Bayhill 24 Friday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

This session will provide useful information and tools to ensure that you and your family know how to stay safe during the disasters and emergencies that can occur in Florida. Preparedness is key to both survival and recovery, and this workshop will include tips for personal disaster planning, the roles and responsibilities of government and the greater emergency management community at all levels, and how to mitigate the challenges people and communities face. This year's session will include highlights of, and lessons learned from, the very challenging 2024 Hurricane Season. The presentation will provide an overview of the effects of disasters on vulnerable populations, including individuals with disabilities, and how to help them survive and recover from a major emergency or disaster event.

Karen Hagan Agency for Persons with Disabilities Karen.Hagan@apdcares.org



Michael Taylor Agency for Persons with Disabilities Michael.Taylor@apdcares.org





#### The Link Between School and Healthcare

Bavhill 26 sunshine health. Friday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

In this session, CMS Health Plan school liaisons will explore the link between school and healthcare for children with special medical needs. They will discuss how medical diagnoses can impact success in school, as well as what services and supports are available to help. They will delve into public education rights to equip parents and guardians to advocate for their children within the school system. The liaisons share their expertise on educational planning to help medically complex children succeed, and will take questions and accounts from parents about their children's experiences in school.

Jason Acosta Sunshine Health Jessica Azevedo Sunshine Health



#### **Through the Looking Glass: Disabilities in Media**

Celebration 1 Friday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

For over a hundred years, many individuals have created the power of storytelling, inclusion, and diversity in our media and community. Pop culture has made an impact on what we consume. But the question remains: What qualifies as a good or bad representation of people with disabilities? Join the FYC for an open discussion as we dive in-depth into the importance of disability representation.

Alexander Gonzalez Serena Wetmore Lilibeth Carrion Vega Jakel Baker

Florida Youth Council Florida Youth Council Florida Youth Council Florida Youth Council



#### **Transition in Early Childhood**

Bayhill 31-32 Friday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

The presentation focuses on the process and procedures, as well as the rules and regulations, of the transition from Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C Early Steps to IDEA Part B Prekindergarten Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Program. The presentation will also provide information on what to expect when moving through the eligibility process through the IDEA Part B Prekindergarten 3-5 program. Additionally, resources will be shared that may help families as their children move through the transition process. This presentation also highlights information related to the changes in the Developmental Delay rule and the impact of those changes on the transition to kindergarten.

Debbi Nicolosi LeNita Winkler

TATS-Technical Assistance and Training System Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional

**Education and Student Services** 

#### **Turn that Down! Heavy Metal Music and Autism**

Bayhill 33

Friday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

There are many ways to deal with being different and being anxious. I use different kinds of music, but especially heavy metal music, to help me get through my days. Yes, some of the lyrics are harsh and yes, some of the music is really loud, but with the way my mind works, I need all the help I can get! I hope you will join me and my dad to talk about the positive effects heavy metal music has in our lives along with listening to some of the songs on my mental health playlist. (Warning: it might get loud!)

Hunter Markle (608) 877-6018 hmarkle05@gmail.com Timothy Markle Forgiveness Factor (608) 262-8033 tim@forgivenessfactor.org

4:00 pm to 5:00 pm
 4:30 pm to 5:00 pm

How ABLE United Can Work for You, Silver Spring II
Gatorland Animal Show: Live Alligators and Crocodiles, Regency Ballroom
Performance by the Pyramid Players, Regency Rotunda
Performance by the Brazilian Voices, Conference Level
Red Carpet Experience, Convention Level

#### 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm CONCURRENT SESSIONS



#### **Anyone Can Be a Self-Advocate - Here's How!**

Celebration 10 Friday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

The focus of this session will be providing Information to self-advocates, allies, caregivers, and other stakeholders about how to get involved in Florida's self-advocacy movement through a variety of opportunities, such as self-advocacy groups (including a virtual group); training in self-advocacy, including legislative advocacy; and joining local boards, councils, and advisory groups. The all self-advocate presentation team made up of current FL SAND Fellows will also share simple and creative ways to incorporate self-determination and self-advocacy skills in one's everyday life and provide information on the Fellows Program.

Kelli Munn FL SAND Breaking Barriers Training Academy (352) 224-0223 contactflsand@gmail.com

#### APD: At a Glance

Plaza International Ballroom Friday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

This session will provide a comprehensive overview of how to access services through the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD). Attendees will gain a general understanding of the application and enrollment process, including eligibility, PreEnrollment, and what to expect along the way. We'll also touch on the structure and purpose of the iBudget waiver program, as well as the range of services and supports available to individuals at different stages of the process.

Liesl Ramos Agency for Persons with Disabilities liesl.ramos@apdcares.org Amanda Ingrassia Agency for Persons with Disabilities amanda.ingrassia@apdcares.org



#### **Building Hope and Understanding: An Introduction to NAMI Greater Orlando and Mental Health Advocacy**

Bavhill 27 Friday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

This presentation provides an overview of NAMI Greater Orlando, a nonprofit dedicated to improving the lives of those affected by mental health conditions. We'll explore our free support groups, education programs, and advocacy efforts, all designed to foster understanding and hope. Additionally, we'll share key facts and statistics about mental health, highlighting the prevalence and impact of mental health conditions in our community and beyond.

Meghan Kirkland NAMI



#### **Coloring for Quietude**

Coral Spring Friday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Coloring for Quietude is a very good, nice, colorful, calming, relaxed, fun, fantastic, imaginative, great, excellent experience. This coping strategy is so great for beginners, intermediates and experts alike who wish to dabble in the prospect of doodling in Fine Arts. All it takes is a piece of paper and a few crayons to begin with and the rest is up to your incredibly coordinated, talented and gifted imagination. Wonderful. Outstanding. Winning. This is always a fun time.

Kathrvna Rinderle NAMI



#### Discover Your Path to Success: A Special VR Presentation for Spanish-Speaking Families

Florida C Friday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Rehabilitación Vocacional (VR, las siglas en inglés) es un programa federal-estatal que ayuda a las personas elegibles con discapacidades físicas o mentales a buscar, conseguir, mantener o avanzar en el empleo. Únase a nosotros para una sesión informativa y motivadora diseñada específicamente para personas con discapacidades y sus familias que hablan español como su primer idioma. Conozca los valiosos recursos disponibles a través del programa de Rehabilitación Vocacional y cómo nuestros programas pueden ayudarle a encontrar carreras significativas y satisfactorias. Le guiaremos a través del proceso y le proporcionaremos información adaptada a sus necesidades únicas.

Johana Valdivieso Florida Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (407) 552-0929 Johana. Valdivieso@vr.fldoe.org

#### **Dispute Resolution and Monitoring (DRM) Alternative Resolution Options**

Celebration 8 Friday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

The presentation is designed to assist parents with the available alternative resolution options, such as state-sponsored mediation and state-facilitated individual educational plan (SFIEP), to resolve disagreements between parents and schools about children's educational programs and support services. State Sponsored mediation is a voluntary process for parties to resolve a dispute and execute a legally binding written agreement.

Brvce Milton

Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services



Come join us for a conversation on supports for military-connected students in Florida schools. Learn about the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, School Liaisons, the MFLC program, legal services, and other resources and programs supporting military children in Florida schools. Topics revolving around issues encountered when children of military personnel transfer schools, including 504 and IEP support, will also be discussed.

Scott Sevin Military Families with Special Needs Network (305) 535-0914 scott@7-dippity.com Maria Barkmeier Military Families with Special Needs Network (305) 535-0914 mvbark@hotmail.com



# **Empowering Families: A Parent Friendly Tool Kit for Supporting Young Children with Special Needs**

Bayhill 31-32 Friday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Join us for an insightful session introducing our Tool Kit, designed for families of young children (ages 0-3) with developmental delays or disabilities. This resource offers practical guidance, state-wide resources, and valuable insights to support early development and family well-being. Through personal stories and real-life applications, we'll demonstrate how families can use this Tool Kit as a vital resource for navigating challenges and celebrating successes.

Kayla Robinson
Florida Parent Leader Alliance as a part of the Florida Association of Healthy Start Associations (239) 240-3359
Robinsonkayla317@gmail.com

### **Everything's Gonna Be OK - Navigating Sibling and Family Relationships in Neurodiverse Households**Bayhill 18

Friday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

We all have unique and individual journeys when it comes to navigating neurodiversity. Families have many dynamics, needs, and facets. Join us for an open and authentic conversation about the heart and hard stuff in families with complex needs.

Christina Smith
University of South Florida Preschool For Creative Learning

Valentina Lopez-Smith

#### **Facilitated IEPs: Building Collaborative Partnerships**

Bayhill 29-30

Friday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

An effective way to build collaborative partnerships with your child's IEP team is through Facilitative Practices. In a facilitated IEP meeting, you can build partnerships, reach true consensus and agreements, focus the IEP on the needs of the student, and exercise effective communication and reflective listening. Parents can feel capable to have a voice, and manage conflict. This session will help empower you as a parent to take an active role in your child's IEP through some strategies we will share during the session.

Rebecca Cox Carol Beitler

Florida Diagnostic & Learning Resources System Florida Diagnostic & Learning Resources System

#### **Finding Joy Beyond the Labels**

Celebration 7 Friday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Nicola and Tommy share their lived experience. Tommy contracted meningitis when he was 9-months old, and given a prognosis of no walk, no talk. Now at 27 years old, he does both, in his own way. Their journey has taken them overseas, and been full of every experience imaginable, resulting in a bond, love, and joy Nicola did not think was possible when Tommy was diagnosed. This session will encourage, challenge and inspire you. It offers simple practical tips to assist you in your everyday life and will help you discover that joy is one step away.

Nicola Irvine Surrender - A Mother's Acceptance of What Is (642) 142-7648 nicola@nicolairvine.com Thomas Pearson

#### **Finding the Queen in You**

Celebration 1 Friday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Do you know that we all wear a crown? Whether you're a growing princess, or wise queen of the time, we all have a queen inside! Join the past and present ladies of Ms. Wheelchair Florida to learn of our stories, and share yours too! It's time to discover the inner queen inside of you!

Shevie Barnes Florida Youth Council shevie@floridayouthcouncil.org





#### Forgiving in an Unforgiving World

Bayhill 33 Friday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Life as a parent of a child with special health care needs can be hard. The world seems to be increasingly negative and unforgiving. It can be hard to maintain a mentally healthy self-perception and a mentally healthy way to engage with others. People misspeak and don't understand us. We deal with anger, resentments, guilt, shame, torn loyalties, grief, loss, and so much more. It can get very overwhelming, very quickly. We all have to deal all that "stuff." Sometimes we deal with it a healthy way, and sometimes not so much. Forgiveness provides us a way to recognize and validate anger as well as learn to express emotions in a safe way, understand the perspective of others, recognize the humanity in all, and increase empathy and compassion. We can choose to forgive people who have hurt us, and we can choose to forgive ourselves. You can learn how to forgive. We will talk about what forgiveness is and what it is not, review the Enright Process Model for Forgiveness, and examine how forgiveness can help.

Timothy Markle Forgiveness Factor (608) 262-8033 tim@forgivenessfactor.org



#### Free Services to Make the Right Assistive Technology Decisions

Celebration 9 Friday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

The Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology (FAAST) provides FREE services to help individuals with disabilities, families, and professionals make informed decisions about assistive technology (AT). From device loans

and demonstrations to financial assistance programs, FAAST connects people with the tools they need to live more independently. Our mission is to increase awareness, access, and acquisition of AT across Florida, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to succeed at home, work, school, and in their community.

Marquesas Blimes Florida Alliance for Assistive Services & Technology (850) 487-3278 mblimes@faast.org Kailey Medlock Florida Alliance for Assistive Services & Technology (850) 766-8703 kmedlock@faast.org

#### From Sobering Statistics to Bold Solutions: Addressing the Housing Crisis for Adults with Autism

Bayhill 25

Friday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

This presentation will highlight the looming housing crisis for adults with autism, emphasizing the need for proactive solutions. A-Town Community, Inc. aims to develop a supported residential community in Tampa Bay, inspired by successful models like First Place AZ in Phoenix. The talk will explore existing barriers, showcase grassroots solutions, and encourage advocacy, investment, and collaboration. By acting early, families, stakeholders, and policymakers can address this pressing issue and create inclusive housing opportunities, ensuring adults with autism can live with dignity and independence.

Barbara Kalinowski A-Town Community, Inc. Brian Brijbag A-Town Community, Inc.



### How to Secure Grants, Fundraise Successfully, and Access Support for Medical, Therapeutic, and Equipment Needs: Guidance from Advocacy Abby

Celebration 5 Friday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

In this session, we'll break down exactly how to unlock financial resources to cover essential medical, therapeutic, and equipment needs. From navigating insurance finds to successfully applying for grants and launching effective fundraisers, you'll leave with clear, actionable strategies to secure the support your family needs. Led by Advocacy Abby, this session will equip you with insider tips, practical steps, and real-world success stories to help you confidently fund what matters most.

Abby Zachritz SupportNow (352) 840-3295 abby@supportnow.org Jordan Arogetti



#### **Inspiring Youth Financial Smarts**

Bayhill 22 Friday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

We all know that money is an important part of life. It gives people opportunities, independence, confidence, feelings of security and ways to improve the lives of others. The question is, how do you help your children understand the importance of - and more importantly, become excited and committed to - healthy money habits for their lifetimes? Award-winning author, Ellen Sabin, will offer tips that help adults engage children in learning financial smarts while inspiring children to realize their POWER to manage money as they make thoughtful choices around spending, sharing, saving, learning and growing money.

Ellen Sabin Watering Can Press (917) 348-4848 Ellen@WateringCanPress.com



#### Lab: Multi-Media Art Lab for Children with Visual or Dual Sensory Impairment

Celebration 12-13 Friday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Have you ever wondered how to make art projects accessible for your child? Join us as we explore some simple modifications that can be made to bring joy and accessibility to a variety of arts and crafts for children with visual impairment. Create a love of the arts at this fun, hands-on lab and leave with your own unique masterpiece!

Tiffany Conrad

Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually

**Impaired** 

Sue Glaser

Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually

**Impaired** 

Andrea Wallace

Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually

**Impaired** 

Cheri Hart

Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually

**Impaired** 



#### **Long-Term Care and Special Needs Trusts**

Celebration 3-4 Friday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Please join Nationwide's Retirement Institute as we discuss 2 pertinent financial planning conversations you should be having with your financial professional in your life. Planning YOUR Future Long-term Care Planning for Parents of Special Needs Children: Long-term Care (LTC) planning is something that parents of special needs children may want to take care of earlier in life than usually considered. Many of these parents face physical challenges in caring for their child that may increase their chance of needing LTC, but also increase the chance they may not be approved for a policy. The good news is that today's LTC solutions are not like your grandmother's LTC policy. Join us to learn more about why planning now is important, and the different options that exist today to help pay for future LTC needs. Planning with Special Needs Trusts: Properly structured trusts can determine how an individual with special needs is provided for. But they are only expensive pieces of paper unless they are properly and adequately funded. Find out what some possible funding options are and why some may be better than others.

Middi Dzihic Nationwide Financial (206) 999-9181 middi.dzihic@nationwide.com Shawn Britt Nationwide Financial (614) 249-6741 britts@nationwide.com Steven Hamilton Nationwide Financial (614) 249-0935 hamils25@nationwide.com

#### Medicaid Spend Down with Funeral Pre-Planning in Florida . . . This IS Good for Life! Ask Me How!

Bayhill 26

44

Friday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Medicaid Spend-Down and Funeral Pre-Planning. Huh? What? You may not have know that you can plan a funeral. memorial, or cremation in advance. Planning ahead for funeral wishes does more than record your final wishes; it also alleviates the burdens that will fall on you and/or your loved ones at the time of loss. Think about it. After hearing that you or your loved one has died, your family will be distraught, grief-stricken, and possibly numb with shock. It will be hard enough to make even a simple decision like what to wear to the funeral, much less to plan a service that they feel good about and that does justice to the life that you've lived. That's a lot of pressure! Let's take some of that pressure off. You can even use a Medicaid Spend-Down to accomplish this. If you want to qualify for Medicaid's medically needy program, you can "spend down" your assets to a level that makes and/or keeps you eligible. But don't waste your Medicaid Spend-down

power. You can make it last forever with a Pre-Need Funeral, Memorial or Life Celebration plan, because planning ahead is an incredibly thoughtful gift of love! In this interactive workshop, we'll spill ALL the tea, and answer ALL your questions.

Earline Blumhagen God's Hands Agency, Inc. (407) 448-1987 eBlumhagen@mindspring.com

#### **Patients and Family First: Health Care Planning is a Partnership**

Celebration 16 Friday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

You know your child best, so it's important to partner with your child's doctors and therapists when health care planning to ensure the best care for your child. This partnership is a main feature of patient- and family-centered care. The Florida Department of Health's Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs Program supports families and health care providers working together as partners. Learn about current information, tips, and resources to strengthen your partnership with your health care team.

Linda Starnes
Florida Department of Health, Children's Medical Services,
Title V Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs Program
(407) 858-5550
Linda.Starnes@flhealth.gov

#### **Pedagogy for Neurodiversity**

Bayhill 21 Friday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

I am thrilled to share Pedagogy for Neurodiversity, a methodology I developed to transform education for neurodivergent individuals, with you. This approach, which earned me the distinction of Cum Laude during my doctoral studies, is deeply personal. As someone who is autistic, has ADHD, and Tourette Syndrome, I understand firsthand the challenges and unique strengths that come with being neurodivergent. In this session, I will guide you through the core principles of this pedagogy and explain how it redefines traditional teaching methods to celebrate the strengths of diverse learners. Together, we'll explore: How to create equitable access to quality education for neurodivergent students; Practical strategies for implementing inclusive practices in classrooms and educational systems; The global impact of a methodology designed to address the unique needs of students with SEN (Special Educational Needs) and SEMH (Social, Emotional, and Mental Health) challenges. This session is for anyone who believes in the power of education to uplift and empower all individuals, regardless of how they experience and navigate the world. As someone who has lived the experience of being neurodivergent in a world not designed for us, I look forward to sharing this transformative approach with you. Together, we can reimagine what education can be.

Abraham Buitrago Arenas International Neurodiversity College of London abraham.buitrago.teacher@gmail.com

#### **Pure Imagination: Combining Music and Autism**

Bayhill 17

Friday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Music is one of the most magical of all the art forms. It can translate everything from horror to beauty to, as Willy Wonka says, pure imagination. In our talk, we are going to show you how the autism community can benefit from the power that is music. From a recorder player, to a DJ, to a karaoke enthusiast, we all have different ways of expressing our creativity and our uniqueness. We're also going to show you the healing power of music, and hopefully give you a way to express yourself or your children through music. There have been many celebrities who are on the autism spectrum, and many of them are musicians. We will show you the power of music and how it affects those on the autism spectrum. Come join us in the world of music, as we take you to a place where only your imagination can go!

James Williams **Edward Couture** Shane Campfield Wisconsin's Community of Practice Hurdle Hurdle

on Autism Spectrum Disorders and (407) 271-0634

madesh90@att.net **Developmental Disabilities** 

(224) 628-6629 imw820@comcast.net

#### Starting with the End in Mind: Graduation and Post-Secondary Success

Celebration 2 Friday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Graduation and postsecondary success begins when students enter the pre-kindergarten through 12th grade educational system. This presentation guides families, caregivers, and service providers through resources and supports that will help students who are deaf and hard of hearing arrive at their destination; graduation and beyond! Join a team from the Resource Materials and Technology Center for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing as we embark on a journey of resources!

Sherry Conrad

Resource Materials and Technology Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

#### Strategies For a Better Night's Sleep

Celebration 14-15 Friday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Join us for an interactive presentation designed to help parents and individuals with disabilities tackle common sleep challenges. Sleep disturbances affect a significant number of children and families, especially those with developmental delays or disabilities. This session will provide practical strategies for identifying and addressing sleep concerns, including tools like sleep diaries, bedtime routines, and environmental adjustments. Attendees will learn about practical strategies used to build healthier sleep habits and improve overall well-being. Be prepared to participate, ask questions, and leave feeling more confident about tackling sleep concerns.

Yudelkis Fuste Chrystal Ayala **Kvo Autism Therapy** Kvo Autism Therapy

#### **The 3 Most Misunderstood Autism Traits**

Bavhill 28

Friday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Autistic behaviors are often misinterpreted through a neurotypical lens, leading to confusion and misjudgment. This eyeopening talk unpacks three of the most misunderstood autism traits—emotional regulation, zoning out, and obsessive

interests—to reveal the deeper truths beneath them. We'll explore how emotional experiences in autistic individuals are not muted, but amplified, sometimes physically painful, and require more time and space to process. What may appear as "zoning out" is actually "zoning in"—a powerful state of focused attention and information processing. And what some label as "obsessive interests" are often soulful, grounding passions that support learning and personal growth. Through this talk, attendees will learn how to recognize these traits as strengths rather than deficits and gain practical tools for better understanding and supporting autistic individuals in everyday life. The ultimate goal: shift from judgment to empathy, and from misunderstanding to meaningful connection.

Daniel Jones The Aspie World theaspieworld@gmail.com



# Your Life, The Job, Your Career! How Vocational Rehabilitation Supports Individuals with Disabilities and Businesses: Exploring Section 504 and Beyond

Celebration 6 Friday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) offers a variety of programs and services to support individuals with disabilities as they find and maintain employment and enhance their independence. Understanding one's rights under the law, which includes section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, is an important part of self-determination and participating in VR services. This session will offer a high-level overview of section 504 and introduce VR's Business Services unit. VR's Business Services unit is a part of VR's dual-customer approach which develops opportunities to engage with employers through collaborative engagements and sustainable partnerships. Join us to learn about the surprising ways VR is building meaningful relationships for successful employment outcomes by meeting the needs of the participant and the business community.

Hilary Boland-Bedoya Florida Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (239) 340-7292 hilary.bolandbedoya@vr.fldoe.org Michael Kiser Florida Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (772) 403-0152 john.kiser@vr.fldoe.org

6:00 pm to 6:30 pm 6:30 pm to 7:00 pm 6:30 pm to 7:00 pm 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm Performance by Milosz Gasior, Regency Rotunda Performance by St. John & Friends, Plaza Pre-Function Performance by Joy Street, Regency Bridge

The Annual Summit on Disabilities, Plaza International Ballroom



June 13, 2025

7:00 pm to 8:30 pm Plaza International Ballroom

# The 27th Annual Sammit on Disabilities

Since The 1st Annual Family Café in June of 1999, creating a space where attendees can connect with the elected officials and policymakers whose actions so profoundly impact individuals with disabilities and their families has been a cornerstone of The Annual Family Café. We're excited to continue the tradition here in 2025!

TOGETHER AS A TEAM!



This year's Summit will be moderated by long-time supporter of The Family Café and Floridians with disabilities, former Florida Senate President Bill Galvano.

The Annual Summit on Disabilities presents a unique opportunity to hear from elected officials, policymakers, and the agencies that serve Floridians with disabilities, connecting attendees with decision makers at the highest level of state government.

The Family Café is committed to helping policymakers understand what daily life is like for the people with disabilities and families that they serve, and to giving our attendees a chance to better understand the policy making process by hearing directly from our state's leaders. We sincerely hope you take advantage of this opportunity to be a part of that dialogue at The 27th Annual Summit on Disabilities!

The 27th Annual Summit on Disabilities will feature a musical performance by singer/songwriter and parent of a child with autism **Staar Fields**, accompanied by musicians from **St. John & Friends**. She is excited to spread her message of hope and encouragement with everyone at The Annual Family Café. For more information, visit staarfields.com.







SATURDAY

June 14, 2025

1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Keynote Address Plaza International Ballroom

# A Little Girl With A Big Love For Life

**Kenny Taylor with Cesily Collette Taylor** 

Cesily Collette Taylor—affectionately known as "CC"—has been defying expectations since the day she was born. A bright and compassionate six-year-old, CC lights up every room she enters with her infectious energy, creativity, and kind heart.

She made her film debut as Young Nessarose in *Wicked*, captivating audiences with her warmth and natural talent. But beyond the screen, CC is an artist, an aspiring chef, an animal lover, and a passionate advocate for kids with Spina Bifida. Whether she's painting, baking up new recipes in the kitchen, or finding ways to make the world more accessible for all children, CC approaches life with curiosity and

determination. She believes every kid deserves a space to play, dream, and be seen, and she's on a mission to make that a reality.

TOGETHER

CC's joy is contagious, her creativity knows no bounds, and her heart is as big as her dreams. She's not just a rising star—she's a little girl with a big love for life, family and community.



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**8:00 am to 5:00 pm** Book Fair, Regency Ballroom

**8:00 am to 5:00 pm** SportsAbility Sampler, Regency Ballroom

**8:00 am to 5:00 pm** Sunshine Health Community Connections Center, Rainbow Spring II

8:00 am to 6:00 pm Club Café sponsored by Florida Community Care, Orlando L

**8:00 am to 6:00 pm** Florida Community Care Discovery Hub, Blue Spring

8:00 am to 6:30 pm Exhibit Hall Open, Regency Ballroom
8:00 am to 6:30 pm GiggleFIT Therapeutic Play Gym, Columbia 36

**8:00 am to 6:30 pm** The Pawesome Spot, Columbia 34

**8:00 am to 7:00 pm** ABLE United Enrollment Hub, Silver Spring II

**8:30 am to 9:30 am** Friends of Bill, Columbia 35

**8:30 am to 5:00 pm** Henry's Friendly Farm Sensory Playroom, Orlando M

8:30 am to 6:00 pm Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually Impaired Interactive Learning Room, Celebration 12-13

**8:30 am to 6:00 pm** PS/Rtl Technology and Learning Connections Hands on Tech Expo, Florida B

8:30 am to 9:30 am CONCURRENT SESSIONS

**9:00 am to 3:30 pm** Adapted Art Exploration presented by Arts4All Florida, Orlando N

**9:30 am to 10:00 am** Performance by Central Florida Community Arts' UpBeat!, Regency Rotunda

**9:30 am to 10:00 am** Red Carpet Experience, Conference Level **10:00 am to 11:00 am** Celebration of Life Ceremony, Barrel Spring II

10:00 am to 11:00 am Down Syndrome Out Loud: Superstars From a New Book Speak Up, Plaza International Ballroom

**10:00 am to 4:00 pm** NSU College of Law Independent Living Kitchen, Rainbow Spring I

10:00 am to 11:00 am CONCURRENT SESSIONS

**11:00 am to 11:30 am** Gatorland Animal Show: Live Alligators and Crocodiles, Regency Ballroom **11:00 am to 11:30 am** Performance by Central Florida Community Arts' UpBeat!. Regency Rotunda

**11:30 am to 12:30 pm** Share Your Story, Plaza International Ballroom

11:30 am to 12:30 pm CONCURRENT SESSIONS

**12:30 pm to 1:00 pm** Performance by the Pyramid Players, Regency Rotunda **1:00 pm to 1:30 pm** Performance by Radiant Voices, Plaza Pre-Function

1:30 pm to 3:00 pm Keynote Address by Kenny Taylor with Cesily Collette Taylor, Plaza International Ballroom

2:00 pm to 3:00 pmABLE United Q&A: Meet the Director, Silver Spring II3:00 pm to 3:30 pmPerformance by the Pyramid Players, Regency Rotunda

3:00 pm to 3:30 pm Red Carpet Experience, Conference Level
3:30 pm to 4:30 pm CONCURRENT SESSIONS

**4:00 pm to 4:30 pm** Red Carpet Experience, Conference Level

**4:00 pm to 5:00 pm**Debunking Myths for ABLE Accounts, Silver Spring II **4:30 pm to 5:00 pm**Performance by the Pyramid Players, Regency Rotunda

5:00 pm to 6:00 pm CONCURRENT SESSIONS

**6:00 pm to 6:30 pm** Performance by Trey Keesling, Regency Rotunda

7:00 pm to 10:00 pm Saturday Night Dance, Plaza International Ballroom

8:30 am to 9:30 pm CONCURRENT SESSIONS

#### **3D Printing Basics**

Manatee Spring I Saturday, 8:30 am to 9:30 am

Technology is very important in the world and helps stimulate the mind of each and every individual. 3D printing is a building block to creative thoughtfulness and digital literacy. In this interactive lesson we aim to teach a basic understanding of 3D printing to all individuals, as well as teaching valuable skills on the use of the laptop, such as command keys and button layout of the free program (Tinkercad). We add a little taste of accomplishment with your very own design to take home with you! It's all about the fun and togetherness you'll experience in this session!

Christopher Glover Easterseals Florida (205) 442-2044 Cglover312@gmail.com Jenn Siffermann Easterseals Florida (561) 725-4444 jsiffermann@fl.easterseals.com Catrina Sanchez Easterseals Florida (813) 391-1755

csanchez@fl.easterseals.com



#### Accessibility Inside the Box: Visual, Tactile, and Auditory Access on your Device(s)

Celebration 12-13 Saturday, 8:30 am to 9:30 am

So many devices have built-in accessibility options that can open the door for your child who has visual impairment to access literacy, communication, and so much more. During this session you will learn about the accessibility features that come installed on a variety of devices that you likely already have in your home. The focus will be on settings that provide visual and auditory access for students who have vision and/or hearing loss. Whether this is new information, or you are knowledgeable about built-in access, come learn or share your experiences with other families. A hands-on lab will be available directly after this session.

Andrea Wallace

Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually Impaired

#### An Overview of the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities (FES-UA)

Bayhill 22

Saturday, 8:30 am to 9:30 am

This presentation is designed to introduce new families and individuals to the qualifications and benefits of the FES-UA scholarship opportunities offered by Step Up For Students. It will highlight the various ways the scholarship can be utilized and showcase the transformative impact these scholarships can have on students and their families.

Paula Nelson Step Up For Students



Attendees will learn from current Florida State University (FSU) students who are excelling and overcoming barriers within a prominent four-year public university. Students will reflect on their experiences and discuss the types of challenges a person with a disability may encounter either with academics or student life activities. Through these experiences, student panelists from the University of Choice (UoC) will highlight lessons learned about engagement, independent living, advocacy, emergency preparedness, and career goals. We will emphasize the importance of interdependence and community-based relations when it comes to thriving in the world and as an individual with a disability.

JR Harding

Florida State University

(850) 510-4628

jharding@fsu.edu

Mitch Tilmon

FSU's University of Choice

(901) 871-2089 jmt21e@fsu.edu Elijah Toomey

FSU's University of Choice

(720) 775-0711

etoomey@fsu.edu

Roy Thorson

FSU's University of Choice

Holden Allen

FSU's University of Choice

Eva Allen

FSU's University of Choice

#### **Bridging the Gap: Harnessing Manual Communication for Inclusivity**

Celebration 5 Saturday, 8:30 am to 9:30 am

Manual communication is the use of hand movements, gestures, facial expressions, and body language to convey messages, often used as an alternative or supplement to spoken language. Specifically, sign language is a manual, visual language that serves as a primary means of communication for many deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals. However, sign language also has applications beyond this community. This presentation will explore the versatility of sign language as a tool for bridging communication gaps with individuals who are deaf, as well as those who are not but benefit from the manual mode of communication.

Olivia Conrad That! Speech and Language Services LLC

#### **Building Your World**

Bayhill 29-30 Saturday, 8:30 am to 9:30 am

When we first learn that we or our child have a disability, we very often go through a period of grief for things that may never be again. And it IS important to acknowledge your feelings of loss. BUT it is also important to throw out the old expectations and start building a world designed for YOU! How can you rewrite the way life is expected to go unordered to meet your needs and the needs of your family better? Join Amy Bodkin, EdS, Autistic former School Psychologist, recipient of multiple disabilities, and mother of two fantastic kids with multiple disabilities. Let's talk about what we CAN do!

Amy Bodkin
Amy Bodkin Consulting

#### **Care Mapping: A Visual Tool to Support Family-Professional Partnerships**

Celebration 16 Saturday, 8:30 am to 9:30 am

Families who have a loved one with disabilities or a chronic health condition often lead busy, complex lives. Navigating medical, educational, and community-related systems can be difficult, and professionals may only know part of the steps families take in accessing all the services they use. Care mapping is a tool that supports families and professionals working together for improved outcomes, allowing families to visualize the big picture and many details of their care activities and resource needs. Learn how care mapping can strengthen family-professional partnerships with providers, educators, and community agencies.

Linda Starnes
Florida Department of Health, Children's Medical Services,
Title V Children and Youth with Special Healthcare
Needs Program
(407) 858-5550
Linda.Starnes@flhealth.gov

Andrea Hickson Florida Family Leaders' Network (954) 608-4052

#### **Connecting as Mothers of Children with Special Needs**

Bayhill 19 Saturday, 8:30 am to 9:30 am

When mothers of children with special needs come together, something magical happens. We share, empathize, and support one another with compassion and understanding. While our children unite us, these gatherings offer so much more: we laugh, learn, and build lasting friendships. You're invited to join us for an interactive, informal, and relaxing conversation. This is your opportunity to share experiences, discuss concerns, and explore topics that matter most to you. Let's connect, support, and grow together in a space created just for us.

Pam Kissoondyal Florida and Virgin Islands Deafblind Collaborative (352) 672-4598 pamsk@ufl.edu

#### **Disability Discrimination - Your Rights, Your Role, Your Responsibilities**

Celebration 10 Saturday, 8:30 am to 9:30 am

Fair treatment isn't a choice, IT'S THE LAW!! The Florida Commission on Human Relations (FCHR) identifies and helps eliminate unlawful discrimination in the workplace, housing, and public accommodations (e.g. hotels, restaurants). FCHR is an independent and impartial state agency that investigates allegations of discrimination to ensure all persons within and associated with the "Disability Family" are able to have equal access to all opportunities and resources as anyone else.

Dante Bonner
The Florida Commission on Human Relations
(850) 907-6822
Dante.Bonner@fchr.myflorida.com



#### **Empowering Communication Skills for Children with Complex Needs**

Celebration 9 Saturday, 8:30 am to 9:30 am

This session emphasizes the importance of building communication skills in children with complex communication needs. Parents will be introduced to Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) and its transformative potential for nonverbal children. Topics include an overview of AAC tools and strategies, how AAC supports learning, independence and social interaction, and practical approaches for integrating AAC into everyday life. The session also provides guidance on collaborating with professionals to ensure a personalized and effective communication plan. Parents will leave feeling confident and equipped with actionable steps to support their child's journey toward optimal communication.

Essa Kennedy



#### **Empowering Your Return: Navigating the Workforce with a Disability**

Plaza International Ballroom Saturday, 8:30 am to 9:30 am

Empowering Your Return: Navigating the Workforce with a Disability is a comprehensive presentation for individuals reentering the workforce after acquiring a disability. This session will provide an overview of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services and programs designed to assist individuals with disabilities in becoming successfully employed.

Peter Shepis Florida Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (904) 486-7145 Peter.Shepis@vr.fldoe.org Veronica Ebuen Florida Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (904) 365-2729 veronica.ebuen@vr.fldoe.org



# Exploring New Technologies, Building Partnerships, and Removing Barriers: Creating Opportunities for Recreation for People of ALL Abilities

Barrel Spring I Saturday, 8:30 am to 9:30 am

Sports Ability Alliance has partnered with the Florida Sports Foundation to work together to increase education, improve advocacy, remove barriers, and create more accessible and inclusive sports, recreation, and leisure activity opportunities for individuals of all abilities and ages. Come learn about the exciting and engaging work these two organizations are doing, and share your ideas, knowledge and experiences in this fun, interactive session.

Fran Gilbert SportsAbility Alliance (850) 201-2944x1 fgilbert@sportsability.org David Jones SportsAbility Alliance (850) 201-2944 davidjones@sportsability.org Genesis Leggett
Florida Sports Foundation
(850) 577-7211
gleggett@playinflorida.com



#### Finding Laughter in Adversity: Writing as a Healing Tool

Bayhill 33 Saturday, 8:30 am to 9:30 am

My friend Mia moved to Hollywood with big acting dreams, but when the writers' and actors' strike hit, everything came to a stop. For a disabled person, that took immense courage. She returned home, and together we thought, "What now?" We wrote a book "Lights, Camera, Jokes!" to laugh through tough times, and it became a #1 new book release in acting, comedy and theatrical. I will share how writing can help us cope with pain, loss, and life's challenges, illustrating that creativity can be a lifeline.

Aaron Wemple Life Winks LLC (314) 484-5647 aaronwemple@gmail.com



#### Florida KidCare: Simplifying Access to Health Care Coverage for Kids

Bayhill 26 Saturday, 8:30 am to 9:30 am

Florida KidCare is the state's affordable, high-quality health and dental insurance program for children from birth until their 19th birthday. In this session, you'll gain an understanding of the four KidCare programs, eligibility requirements, the wide range of rich benefits available, and more. We'll also explore the State of Florida's CMS Health Plan, designed for children with specialized health care needs. Navigating health insurance options can be complex, but families can count on KidCare to make it simple.

Catherine Beeche Florida Healthy Kids Corporation (850) 701-6168 beechec@healthykids.org

Brittani Lewis Sunshine Health Brittani.Lewis@sunshinehealth.com

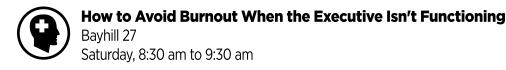


#### **Fundraising for Family and Non-Profits**

Celebration 3-4 Saturday, 8:30 am to 9:30 am

Jim Sayih is a parent of a differently-abled son. Jim personally had to find ways to meet medical expenses. Later he created a non-profit to benefit Shriners Children's hospitals for 19 years. During that time Jim helped families fundraise personally. In 2015, Jim founded another non-profit, Special Compass, to specifically benefit the IDD population in sports, education and housing.

Jim Sayih Special Compass (305) 297-5328 Jim@SpecialCompass.org Michael Sayih Special Compass (305) 297-5328 Info@SpecialCompass.org



This session explores practical strategies to reduce overwhelm, build resilience, and regain control in your daily life. Learn how to identify the signs of burnout, create realistic systems of support, and prioritize self-care without adding more stress to your plate.

Korin Menard Mental Health Transformations LLC Shoshanah Mercado Dancing in the Rain Psychology

#### Inclusion and Diversity - Understanding Differences in the Transition from High School to Adulthood

Celebration 2 Saturday, 8:30 am to 9:30 am

This presentation explores the importance of recognizing and supporting diverse learning needs as individuals transition from high school to adult programs. It emphasizes the significance of community inclusion in helping clients navigate this transition, highlighting the role of inclusive employment opportunities, post-secondary education, and social integration. Attendees will gain insights into how understanding and accommodating individual differences can enhance the success of these transitions, fostering independence and equal opportunities for all.

Bridget Barahona-Noel Ascend Transition Services (239) 851-8608 bridgetb@ascendswfl.com

#### **Instructional Planning and Supporting Students with Disabilities**

Celebration 8 Saturday, 8:30 am to 9:30 am

Join us for an insightful session designed for parents and educators to explore key topics related to dyslexia and early literacy. Together, we'll delve into characteristics of dyslexia, literacy policies and resources, third grade progression policies, K-2 accommodations, unique accommodations and SLD updates. This session will equip you with practical knowledge and tools to support students with disabilities in achieving his or her full potential. Whether you are a parent, teacher or advocate, you'll leave empowered to foster meaningful learning experiences for all students.

Angela Roland

Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services



#### Medical Group Homes Demystified: Answers to Questions You Didn't Know to Ask

Bayhill 25 Saturday, 8:30 am to 9:30 am

This session is designed to provide families with a deeper understanding of medical group homes, particularly for adults with complex medical needs. We'll address misconceptions, answer questions families may not have thought to ask, and explore how these homes provide specialized care and support. Attendees will gain practical insights into evaluating group

home options, navigating the decision-making process, and understanding how these environments promote safety, well-being, and quality of life. This session is ideal for anyone seeking clarity and confidence about care options for their loved one, whether they are considering group home placement now or simply want to be informed.

Antoinette Munroe Audubon Gardens Group

#### **Navigating the ESA Programs in Florida**

Bayhill 28 Saturday, 8:30 am to 9:30 am

This will be an informative session designed to guide families through Florida's Education Savings Account (ESA) programs, including the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Unique Abilities (FES-UA). In this session, we will walk you through the step-by-step application process, provide tips on how to navigate the system, and show how to maximize your funding based on the child's specific needs. We will also explore how to plan a customized education for your child, focusing on their abilities, interests, and unique needs. Real-life examples of eligible expenses, such as specialized therapies, adaptive learning materials, and homeschool support will be shared to help you visualize the broad scope of services and resources the funds can be used for. Whether families are new to ESA programs or looking for ways to get the most from the scholarship, this session will empower them with the knowledge and tools to take control of their child's education journey.

Alexandra Batista Rodriguez Steps Learning Center LLC (407) 676-4677 abatista@stepslearn.com

#### **Pawsitive Actions!**

Coral Spring Saturday, 8:30 am to 9:30 am

In this session, attendees will learn about the rights and responsibilities of obtaining training and using a service animal. They will also learn the legal difference between service, assistance, emotional and therapy animals, including where they can go and what's required.

Carol Christopherson Florida Service Dogs, Inc. (904) 226-6982 buddynme@bellsouth.net





#### **Presenting Your Medicaid Fair Hearing**

Bayhill 17 Saturday, 8:30 am to 9:30 am

This presentation will assist attendees in understanding how to present their Medicaid and Medicaid waiver Fair Hearing. Topics during the presentation include: Preparation prior to the Fair Hearing; Documentation and evidence to submit to the Fair Hearing Office; How to present your case; and What to expect during and after the Fair Hearing.

Jason Khan Disability Rights Florida (850) 488-9071 jasonk@disabilityrightsflorida.org



#### Social Security Presents: Benefits for People with Disabilities

Celebration 6 Saturday, 8:30 am to 9:30 am

Social Security has provided financial protection for our nation's people for nearly 90 years. Chances are, you either receive Social Security benefits or know someone who does. With retirement, disability, and survivors' benefits, Social Security is one of the most successful anti-poverty programs in our nation's history. We are passionate about helping you by delivering financial support, providing superior customer service, and ensuring the security of your information - helping you secure today and tomorrow. This session covers an overview of Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income Programs (SSI) program eligibility requirements, when to apply for benefits, the application process, and details on how to use agency services

Danielle West-Lane Angela Love Tina Williams

Social Security Administration Social Security Administration Social Security Administration





#### Start Your Morning with Yoga and Mindfulness with Florida 4-H

Bayhill 20 Saturday, 8:30 am to 9:30 am

Come start your day out right! Join Florida 4-H for a relaxing yoga and mindfulness session for youth and their families. This session offers a calming space to unwind while learning simple yoga movements and mindfulness techniques to reduce stress, improve focus, and promote well-being. No prior experience is needed; just come ready to relax and recharge!

Hope MusgroveHeather PogueLaura ValenciaFlorida 4-HFlorida 4-HUF/IFAS Extensionhmusgrove@ufl.eduh.pogue@ufl.edulauraval@ufl.edu





#### The ABCs of Guardian Advocacy and Special Needs Trust

Bayhill 21 Saturday, 8:30 am to 9:30 am

In this seminar, Sarah AuMiller will address several of the legal challenges which will be encountered within the lifetime of a person with special needs. Whether the person is a minor, a young adult, or older adult, the families or advocates must

be prepared by addressing the special person's unique personal and social needs. Families of people with special needs face planning challenges that accompany longer life expectancies - a future without full independence - and the need to maintain an outstanding quality of life. You will gain an overview of how to create a customized, comprehensive plan for your special person.

Sarah AuMiller The Law Offices of Hoyt & Bryan (407) 977-8080 marketing@hoytbryan.com



#### The Disability Vote: Breaking Barriers and Building Power in Florida

Celebration 14-15 Saturday, 8:30 am to 9:30 am

In Florida, over 2.7 million voters with disabilities represent a vital and influential demographic. This presentation explores the impact of the disability vote, highlighting why it matters and addressing barriers such as accessibility and voter education. Deborah Dietz and Marilyn Baldwin will discuss the importance of disability sensitivity, showcase accessible voting methods like Vote by Mail, and provide practical resources. Attendees will leave empowered with knowledge to ensure equitable participation for individuals with disabilities in the democratic process.

Deborah Dietz Disability Independence Group Marilyn Baldwin
The League of Women Voters Florida

#### The Fundamentals of Comfortable Wheelchair Sitting

Manatee Spring II Saturday, 8:30 am to 9:30 am

This session is designed to provide practical, straightforward guidance on wheelchair seating. Attendees will explore the principles of comfortable and healthy sitting, including pressure injury prevention and evaluating different device and accessory options. The session will also introduce adaptive technology to improve seated comfort and health. Both those new to this topic or looking for the latest advancements will gain practical insights and tools to enhance the experience of wheelchair sitting for yourself or those you care for.

Tim Balz
Kalogon
(321) 465-4504
Tim.Balz@kalogon.com

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#### The Impact of Music Intervention on Early Childhood Development (Birth-3 Years Old)

Bayhill 31-32 Saturday, 8:30 am to 9:30 am

This session will highlight the importance of music intervention throughout the first years of life, examine current research that supports music intervention (Infant Directed Singing, Music Therapy and Autism Spectrum Disorder), discuss intervention and strategies to use at home, address limitations related to sensory aversions, and familiarize families with well-known songs to sing at home.

Elise Sobelman UM Lind Ray Intervention Center (973) 699-1504 esobelman@miami.edu



#### **The Quest for Cookies**

Celebration 7 Saturday, 8:30 am to 9:30 am

What can a twenty-one year old young lady with severe disabilities and the developmental age of eighteen months teach you? According to her dad, quite a bit! The Quest for Cookies shares the story of one dedicated girl who decided she wanted to sample every cookie in the pantry. With reflections on his aunt, who was institutionalized for a large chunk of her life, and his cookie monster of a daughter, Jeff Katz's presentation will have you crying and laughing out loud. Please take a look at my recent delivery of this speech to a sell out crowd for The Friendship Circle of Virginia. www.youtube.com/@coachjeffkatz

Jeff Katz (804) 596-6596 jakatz@live.com

#### **Using Charting the Life Course Tools for Person Centered Planning**

Bayhill 18 Saturday, 8:30 am to 9:30 am

This session is a high-level overview of Charting the Llfe Course (CtLC) Tools, which are a part of the Therap documentation solution to facilitate Person Centered Plans. This session will be an overview of the following tools: The Life Trajectory, The Integrated Support Star, The Life Domains Tool, and charting Reciprocal and Family Roles. This session is geared to families, people who use supports, and anyone who wants to plan for life's changes. CtLC tools are useful for anyone at any time and provide a practical framework for decision making and planning.

Heather Daily
Therap Services LLC
(470) 604-7003
heather.daily@therapservices.net



**9:00 am to 3:30 pm** Adapted Art Exploration presented by Arts4All Florida, Orlando N

**9:30 am to 10:00 am** Performance by Central Florida Community Arts' UpBeat!, Regency Rotunda

**9:30 am to 10:00 am**Red Carpet Experience, Conference Level
Celebration of Life Ceremony, Barrel Spring II

**10:00 am to 11:00 am**Down Syndrome Out Loud: Superstars From a New Book Speak Up,

Plaza International Ballroom

**10:00 am to 4:00 pm** NSU College of Law Independent Living Kitchen, Rainbow Spring I

#### 10:00 am to 11:00 am CONCURRENT SESSIONS



#### **4 Pillars of Advocacy**

Celebration 10 Saturday, 10:00 am to 11:00 am

Dealing with broken systems is terribly frustrating, and unless you're armed with the knowledge you need, you'll be yet another victim who's lost and confused. In this session, we'll cover the 4 pillars of advocacy that everyone should know and provide details of the FDDC's Partners in Policymaking program. Don't miss this opportunity to learn about and apply for this year's class! Florida's most incredible advocates are PIP grads!!!

Stacey Hoaglund Florida Developmental Disabilities Council (954) 261-3703 shoaglundpartner@gmail.com



#### **ABCs and 123s of SNTs**

Celebration 3-4 Saturday, 10:00 am to 11:00 am

Attendees will learn the basics of Special Needs Trusts. What are the different types? Who needs one? What benefits will it protect?

Kole Long Special Needs Lawyers, P.A. (727) 443-7898 Kole@specialneedslawyers.com







#### **Adaptive Cooking Interactive Session**

Manatee Spring I Saturday, 10:00 am to 11:00 am

Cooking is a basic life skill, and our goal is to assist individuals in creating independence through teaching adaptive cooking skills. In this interactive session, individuals of all ages will be able to create their own culinary creation using adaptive cooking techniques. Resources will be provided to successfully adapt basic recipes to create independence for all abilities.

Catrina Sanchez Easterseals Florida (813) 391-1755 csanchez@fl.easterseals.com Jenn Siffermann Easterseals Florida (561) 725-4444 jsiffermann@fl.easterseals.com



#### **Beyond the Ticket: Your Employment Adventure Awaits!**

Celebration 6 Saturday, 10:00 am to 11:00 am

The Ticket to Work and Self Sufficiency Program is a Social Security Administration Program that supports career development. Experts from Vocational Rehabilitation will provide general information about the Ticket to Work Program with Florida Vocational Rehabilitation, discuss balancing employment and Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income, and other related Social Security benefits employment support programs in plain and understandable language.

Clenetra Lockwood Florida Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (850) 245-3497 Clenetra.Lockwood@vr.fldoe.org

Willette Bowers Florida Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (850) 245-3271 Willette.Bowers@vr.fldoe.org



#### **Breaking Barriers: Inclusive Taekwondo for Neurodivergent Athletes**

Manatee Spring II Saturday, 10:00 am to 11:00 am

Discover the transformative power of inclusive Taekwondo in this interactive session designed for neurodivergent individuals and their advocates. Led by Master G, an International Certified Taekwondo expert with decades of experience, this workshop explores practical strategies to foster confidence, focus, and physical fitness through adaptable martial arts techniques. Learn how to create a supportive environment that celebrates neurodiversity, empowers athletes of all abilities, and builds life skills beyond the mat. Whether you are a coach, parent, educator, or community leader, leave with actionable tools to help neurodivergent athletes thrive.

Master G. A Charity Empowered to Save Souls (321) 338-3561 masterg@acetss.org

#### **Celebration of Life**

Barrel Spring II Saturday, 10:00 am to 11:00 am

This session is for you if a loved one has died, and you would like to receive support in your grieving process. Together, we celebrate our loved one's gifts and find comfort in remembering them. We share, reflect, and support one another in our sorrow. We come together each year because we know that sharing and caring together is healing. It allows us to pause and reflect as we honor the lives of those who profoundly touched our lives. For people with physical or mental disabilities, the loss of a loved one can be especially upsetting. The emotions can feel overwhelming, but within the safe and supportive environment of The Family Café, healing can continue. Your facilitator is Paula Petry, PhD, author, speaker, and grief expert. Paula will share her deeply personal and transformational journey through her deep sadness and grief from the unexpected loss of her daughter Alexandra. She has prepared a special presentation, small ceremony and handouts to help you experience your grief from a position of strength and gratitude. You will also receive a memento and a copy of Paula's memoir, *A Mother's Courage to Awaken*, Mango Press 2020. "My daughter was everything to me, and the thought of living without her felt unimaginable. Nothing I did brought me comfort or fulfillment. It was through an unexpected encounter with a wise man that I began to steadily walk my path to peace."

The Celebration of Life Ceremony was established in 2012 after the passing of Lizzy Barrows, a member of The Family Café's Florida Youth Council. Every year, we gather to celebrate her legacy and the impact she had on her community.

Paula Petry paula@paulapetry.com



What do Jeopardy, Family Feud, and the month of June have in common? The answer: The 2nd Annual Disability Faceoff Game Show! Join us for an exciting and fun-filled event where you can test your knowledge, learn fascinating facts about our community's history, and win amazing prizes! Whether you're a trivia enthusiast or just looking for a great time, this is an event you won't want to miss. See you there!

JJ Humphrey Florida Youth Council (239) 823-8790 jj@floridayouthcouncil.org



#### Down Syndrome Out Loud: Superstars from a New Book Speak Up

Plaza International Ballroom Saturday, 10:00 am to 11:00 am

Moderated by Melissa Hart, author of Down Syndrome Out Loud: 20+ Stories about Disability and Determination (Sourcebooks, 2025), this fun and lively panel features five people profiled in the book. They'll share anecdotes about their creative work, their hobbies, and their activism, along with a wealth of advice on everything from how to promote your business on TikTok and how to break into the Hollywood film industry to how to take care of your physical and mental health while traveling around the country as a public speaker. Participants will receive a robust handout of resources.

Melissa Hart Abigail Adams Zachary Gottsagen

Source Books Kayla Mckeon

melissahartsmith@gmail.com Allison Fogarty Charlotte Woodward

**Early Intervention Roundtable Coral Spring** Saturday, 10:00 am to 11:00 am

This session, hosted by the Early Steps Program, will be a chance to share or listen to other families talk about their triumphs and challenges as parents of infants, toddlers, and young children who have a disability, delay, or at-risk condition. Come to network, learn from, and support each other through these early, most formative and vital years. Early Steps staff will facilitate the discussion. This roundtable is open to all families who have children ages 0-3 years. Your child doesn't have to be enrolled in the Early Steps Program to attend.

Marisol Rose Florida Department of Health. Children's Medical Services, Early Steps Program (850) 938-9198 Mrose@manasotabuds.org

**Evelyn Figueroa** Bay Area Early Steps Efigueroa2@usf.edu

Doris Tellado North Central Early Steps dtellado@peds.ufl.edu

**Beverly Montgomery** Southernmost Coast Early Steps Bmontgomery@fl.easterseals.com

Natalie Eno Treasure Coast Early Steps neno@fl.easterseals.com

#### **Empowering Independence: Equipping Children with Skills, Confidence,** and Resilience for Lifelong Success

Bayhill 28 Saturday, 10:00 am to 11:00 am

This presentation empowers parents and educators to prepare children for a successful, independent life by addressing essential skills, strategies, and overcoming barriers. It emphasizes the formative years' impact on building habits, confidence, and resilience. Attendees will explore practical tools like assistive technologies, approaches fostering a growth mindset, and self-advocacy techniques. By tackling challenges like learned helplessness and fear of failure, participants will leave equipped to guide children toward meaningful independence and lifelong success. This dynamic session includes real-life

stories, interactive activities, and actionable takeaways.

Kiera Anderson

**Inclusive Education Services** 

(407) 687-0442

kiera.anderson@ucf.edu

Jaime Best

**Inclusive Education Services** 

Amy Freshley

**Inclusive Education Services** 

Jonathan Beaty

**Inclusive Education Services** 

# Florida Department of Health Office of Medical Marijuana Use: An Introduction to Florida's Medical Marijuana Program

Bayhill 26

Saturday, 10:00 am to 11:00 am

This presentation will provide the audience with information and education from the Florida Department of Health Office of Medical Marijuana Use. The presentation will provide patients and caregivers with information about Florida's Medical Marijuana Program.

Carmen Dixon
Florida Department of Health, Office of Medical Marijuana Use (561) 545-2043
carmen.dixon@flhealth.gov



#### For Dads: Getting Involved

Bayhill 17 Saturday, 10:00 am to 11:00 am

This workshop is designed to help dads understand some of the issues that can negatively impact their involvement as fathers with their children, to help them recognize and identify specific reasons they may not be participating, and to identify strategies to help them become more involved in their children's lives.

Mark Keith Resource Materials and Technology Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (904) 827-2731 mark.keith@rmtcdhh.org

#### From Misunderstood to Empowered: My Journey as an Autistic Black Woman

Celebration 7 Saturday, 10:00 am to 11:00 am

I will be discussing my journey with undiagnosed autism in my youth and now as an adult and how it shaped my identity as a Black woman in advocacy, and describing experiences and struggles in elementary through college with communication, sensory challenges, and systemic barriers. Overall, I would like to discuss and promote early intervention and access to testing, advocating for inclusive educational and healthcare spaces, and finding empowerment in my diagnosis as a late diagnosed adult. The hope is to bring awareness and education to parents and their children.

Jericka Knox (727) 642-6206 Jericka.knox@gmail.com Talhia Rangel will discuss the various legal decision-making options for people with disabilities upon reaching the age of majority, and what that means for them and their families. While many default to guardianship, this presentation will focus on alternatives such as guardian advocacy, powers of attorney, and supported decision-making agreements. Our focus will be more on guardian advocacy, and how while guardian advocacy, section 393.12, Florida Statutes, is the law across Florida, navigating the court system can be challenging, and may also differ from circuit court to circuit court.

Talhia Rangel Nova Southeastern University College of Law

#### **Hope Florida - Supporting Families**

Celebration 8 Saturday, 10:00 am to 11:00 am

Hope Florida Director Richard Strickland will provide information regarding supporting Florida families. Hope Florida is an initiative spearheaded by First Lady Casey DeSantis which utilizes Hope Navigators to unite communities while guiding Floridians on an individualized path to prosperity, economic self-sufficiency and hope.

Richard Strickland Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services

# I Heard the Light: How a Mother's Refusal to Accept "No" Empowered Her Son with Autism to Express Himself Through Music

Bayhill 33 Saturday, 10:00 am to 11:00 am

The core of my talk is to share the journey I've taken with my son, Milosz. It is the story of a mother who persevered to care for her son diagnosed with severe autism, and of a son who tirelessly worked to learn music as a means of expressing himself where words fell short. I aim to raise awareness about the crucial role music can play in the lives of individuals with differently-wired brains. More importantly, I want to inspire other families facing the challenges of raising an autistic child. In 2005, when Milosz was diagnosed, I often wished there was someone to guide me through those difficult early days. Now, I want to be that someone for parents and caregivers who have just received their child's diagnosis. I want them to know they are not alone, and that there are ways to find healing and strength, even when it feels like everything is lost. Milosz was diagnosed with severe autism at the age of two. Despite continuous speech therapy, he struggles with speech delay, comprehension, social interactions, and completing everyday activities independently. However, he has found solace in the world of music, developing the ability to memorize multiple pages of advanced-level compositions. He was immediately captivated by the black and white keys of the piano from the moment he first sat at one. Through careful guidance from our family, Milosz has become a performing pianist. During my time as a parent co-chair on the Exceptional Student Education (ESE) advisory committee, we were able to successfully mainstream Milosz into school with the support of an ESE assistant. He also made history as the first autistic piano major in the 35-year history of the Pinellas County Center for the Arts. Today, although Milosz cannot communicate verbally, he volunteers to play the piano at the Moffitt Cancer Center for patients, their families, and medical staff. He also performs at various galas and fundraisers in the community, using his music to connect with others in ways words cannot.

Bozena Gasior (813) 325-0030 bozenagasior@gmail.com

Milosz Gasior

#### **Increasing Access and Literacy Through Adapted Books**

Bayhill 29-30

Saturday, 10:00 am to 11:00 am

People of ALL abilities deserve the right to experience literature! Adapted books bridge the gap to literacy by making books accessible for ALL learners, especially those with disabilities. This presentation will define, explore, and showcase adapted books, which feature simplified language, visual supports, and interactive elements. These adaptations can increase access, engagement, language development, and comprehension. We will provide various examples that can meet the needs of a diverse range of individuals.

Matthew Take
John Love Elementary #73A

Melissa Call Florida Diagnostic & Learning Resources System



# Lab: Assistive Technology Hands-On Learning Lab for Children with Visual or Dual Sensory Impairment

Celebration 12-13 Saturday, 10:00 am to 11:00 am

During this interactive session, participants can get hands-on with everyday technology and their built-in accessibility options to learn how they can provide access to literacy, communication, and so much more! The devices and accessibility options will be reviewed in depth in the session Accessibility Inside the Box. Come learn, connect, and play!

Tiffany Conrad Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually Impaired Cheri Hart Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually Impaired

Sue Glaser Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually Impaired Andrea Wallace Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually Impaired





Come meet and interact with other military family members, civilian and military service providers, and Florida Military Family Special Needs Network partners. We would like to hear from you about your views on issues related to military lifestyle. There will be opportunities to identify gaps in the support systems for military-connected families, discuss effective interventions, voice concerns, and ask questions for follow-up action. All military-connected members and their families including Active Duty, Reserves, Guard and Retirees, as well as any civilians who work with or who have loved ones in the military, will enjoy this session!

Scott Sevin
Military Families with Special Needs Network
(305) 535-0914
scott@7-dippity.com

Maria Barkmeier Military Families with Special Needs Network (305) 535-0914 mvbark@hotmail.com

# My Needs Network: Improving Access to Resources Through Community Partnership and Participation

Celebration 5 Saturday, 10:00 am to 11:00 am

My Needs Network is a free, nationwide, easy to use resource-networking service designed specifically for the disabled community. In 2018 My Needs Network was unexpectedly founded through a two-year Community Based Participatory Research project. The project's results identified disabled community members' clinical and non-clinical needs related to accessing resources. These "needs" led to designing and building My Needs Network: a combined platform-concept that serves as a solution to those needs. Today, My Needs Network continues to prioritize improving disabled communities' access to resources, services and supplies via multiple tools and communication methods; regardless of location or type of disability. Community Based Participation methods continue to be utilized to ensure My Needs Network is a current, sustainable resource hub for parents, families, social workers, case managers, non-profits, and any other entity within the disabled community. In this presentation we will discuss our (1) current areas of focus, (2) our growth strategies through various agendas, resources and networks; and (3) a call for further organizational collaboration and partnership.

Mark Fafard University of Florida, College of Medicine-Jacksonville (My Needs Network) (904) 588-2855 mark.fafard@jax.ufl.edu



#### **Navigating College Life with a Learning Disability**

Celebration 2 Saturday, 10:00 am to 11:00 am

This session will be a family presentation about navigating both large university and small college experiences. We will discuss advocating for yourself, setting up accommodations with the disability office, and navigating Vocational Rehabilitation services. Additionally, finding your "sweet spot" in regards to how many classes to take, how to determine a balanced schedule (hard vs easy classes), and balances between work and school.

Rebeka Edge Not Your Average BCBA Corbin Edge

Magnola Edge



Navigating through the realities of day-to-day life can be challenging for anybody, but especially for individuals with disabilities. Between school, employment, community accessibility, relationships, and healthcare, the panel will host an honest discussion with the audience about the ups and downs, barriers, and innovative ways they have found that have worked in making decisions in hopes of empowering others on various ideas to strengthen their abilities, self-advocacy skills and communities. Audience participation is welcomed.

Robyn Stawski robyn.stawski@gmail.com

Canalissi25@gmail.com

Rebecca Crosby RebeccaRCrosby@gmail.com Chategua Pinkston FL Self-Advocates Network'D (SAND) & FL SAND Fellows (813) 410-2255



#### **NETTLS** Special Needs Trust Services - Helping Address the Needs of Individuals FARGO Living with a Disability

Sara Canali

Florida A Saturday, 10:00 am to 11:00 am

This session will help attendees to understand the demand and need for special needs trust (SNT) services. It will help to identify the key features of these trusts and share expenses that are potentially covered by SNTs. We will explain how we can help and will explore the statistics, our approach and how families can reach out to us.

Myrian Garrett Wells Fargo Special Needs Trust Services (737) 218-5142 myrian.garrett@wellsfargo.com

#### **Step Up for Students: Latest Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities** (FES-UA) Updates & Reimbursement Process

Bayhill 22 Saturday, 10:00 am to 11:00 am

This presentation offers a comprehensive update on the FES-UA scholarship program, focusing on key changes, program insights related to reimbursements, and their impact on students, schools, and providers. It is designed to equip attendees with the knowledge and tools to maximize the benefits of the FES-UA Scholarship. Specifically tailored for families, the presentation will provide a detailed understanding of the reimbursement process. Attendees will learn how to navigate reimbursement procedures effectively, identify eligible expenses, and utilize available resources.

Hallah Hancock Step Up For Students Don'Nita Stephens

#### **Steps to Success: Addressing Health Care Challenges**

Celebration 16 Saturday, 10:00 am to 11:00 am

Navigating the health care system can be challenging, especially when your health care needs are not being fully met. Knowing how to communicate your concerns effectively is essential to improving access to quality care. This session will provide tools and strategies to help you identify the right resources and take proactive steps to address challenges. Join us to learn actionable steps and strategies to more effectively communicate your health care needs.

Linda Starnes Florida Department of Health, Children's Medical Services, Title V Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs Program (407) 858-5550 Linda.Starnes@flhealth.gov

Abria McNeill
Florida Alliance for Assistive Services & Technology abria.mcneill@flhealth.gov



#### **Taking a Holistic Developmental Approach to Support**

Bayhill 31-32 Saturday, 10:00 am to 11:00 am

In Taking a Holistic Developmental Approach to Support, Amy Bodkin, EdS shares her approach to supporting families discussed in her book "Special Needs Kids Are People Too: Seeing the Possibilities Through a Neurodiverse Lens." Too often we provide support through a diagnostic lens, but in reality, children are not their diagnoses. They are whole persons in a state of development, and as such they require holistic support through a developmental lens. Join Amy Bodkin, EdS as she takes what we have learned through the Neurodiversity Movement and applies it to what we know about Child Development and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

Amy Bodkin
Amy Bodkin Consulting



#### **The Science of Self Care**

Bayhill 27
unshine health Saturday, 10:00 am to 11:00 am

Research shows that caregivers may be at risk of experiencing negative effects from the emotional challenges of supporting children who have experienced trauma or distress. This training addresses both the rewarding and difficult aspects of caring for children with these experiences, offering practical strategies to help prevent burnout and compassion fatigue. It aims to provide attendees with useful tools and evidence-based resources to manage the emotional strain of compassion fatigue, burnout, vicarious trauma, and secondary trauma. Additionally, it focuses on ways to increase compassion satisfaction and enhance overall well-being. This presentation provides research-based information to support caregivers and parents and is not intended for medical diagnosis or advice.

Chad Sedam Sunshine Health (866) 796-0530 Chad.R.Sedam@centene.com



Join us for an engaging panel discussion on assistive technology (AT) tools that support successful transitions across various life stages, whether it's from school to work, independent living, or aging in place. Panelists will share insights on practical AT solutions, funding resources, and strategies to navigate key transitions with confidence and independence.

Tim McCann Florida Alliance for Assistive Services & Technology (844) 353-2278 tmccann@faast.org Eric Reed Florida Alliance for Assistive Services & Technology (850) 487-3278 ereed@faast.org

#### **Understanding and Treating Auditory Processing Disorders When Your Child Has Multiple Diagnoses**

Bayhill 25

Saturday, 10:00 am to 11:00 am

Does your child struggle to follow directions or understand speech, especially with background noise? Many children with auditory processing challenges also have other diagnoses like ADHD, dyslexia, hearing loss, reading difficulties, or speech delays. This presentation will help parents understand how these conditions can overlap and affect their child's daily life. We'll explore practical solutions that really work, including specialized evidence-based listening programs and classroom strategies. Learn how to identify which difficulties stem from auditory processing and discover the many ways we can help your child succeed through proven treatment methods. Real success stories will show how other families have navigated similar challenges.

Rachel Cohen ListenHEAR (239) 444-7393 rachel@listenhear.net



## **Unlocking Success: Navigating Manifestation Determination Reviews**with Confidence

Celebration 1 Saturday, 10:00 am to 11:00 am

When a student with disabilities faces potential suspension or expulsion, the stakes are high. Manifestation Determination Reviews (MDRs) ensure their rights are upheld and their educational access remains protected. This engaging session will empower you with the knowledge to: Understand what qualifies as a change of placement; Navigate the legal requirements and procedural safeguards for students covered under IDEA and Section 504; and Advocate for essential supports like Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBAs) and Positive Behavioral Intervention Plans (PBIPs). Through real-world scenarios, actionable strategies, and a deep dive into key regulations and case law, you'll gain practical tools to advocate effectively and secure the behavioral and educational supports your child needs. Join us to turn challenges into opportunities for growth and success for students with disabilities.

Nately Alvarez Disability Rights Florida (850) 488-9071 natelya@disabilityrightsflorida.org Ann Siegel Disability Rights Florida (850) 488-9071 anns@disabilityrightsflorida.org

#### What Happens When the School Bus Stops Coming?

Bayhill 19 Saturday, 10:00 am to 11:00 am

This is a time to connect with fellow caregivers and family members as we navigate the realities of life after the school bus stops coming for our children with special needs. Together, we'll explore the challenges of this phase and celebrate successes along the way. You're invited to join us for an interactive, informal, and relaxing conversation. Share your experiences, learn from others, and find comfort in knowing you're not alone. Let's talk about what matters most to you and support each other on this journey.

Pam Kissoondyal Florida and Virgin Islands Deafblind Collaborative (352) 672-4598 pamsk@ufl.edu

#### Wrangling to Shepherding - Strategies for Churches to Include Children with Special Needs

Bayhill 18 Saturday, 10:00 am to 11:00 am

So many children with special needs have been kicked out of churches or are unable to attend children's classes without a parent present. This breaks my heart! Church should be the most welcoming and safe place these children can go. As a BCBA (behavior therapist), a parent and grandparent of special needs, and a kids' minister, I can help churches know how to navigate some of the more challenging behaviors of kids with special needs and learn how to minister and connect with our kids and reach their hearts. This session will not be focused on why this is needed so much, it will be focused on practical strategies that we can use in children's church and Sunday school. If you minister to children who wander away or run from services, children who need accommodations, or children who become overly stimulated, this session will have practical solutions to help these children thrive in your services. If you need help with classroom management, this session will give you new skills to use within your ministry. If you are a parent of a special needs child that needs more help at church, this session will give you the knowledge to equip your church to better meet the needs of your child.

Dawn Leonard Operation Light Force (863) 430-3371 dawnfr1@gmail.com

11:00 am to 11:30 am 11:00 am to 11:30 am 11:30 am to 12:30 pm Gatorland Animal Show: Live Alligators and Crocodiles, Regency Ballroom Performance by Central Florida Community Arts' UpBeat!. Regency Rotunda Share Your Story, Plaza International Ballroom

#### 11:30 am to 12:30 pm CONCURRENT SESSIONS



#### **5 Reasons Why You Need an ABLE Account**

Celebration 3-4 Saturday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Join us for an informative presentation on the "Top 5 Reasons You Need an ABLE Account." Discover how ABLE accounts can be a game-changer for individuals with disabilities and their families. Learn about the tax advantages, financial

flexibility, and empowerment that come with having an ABLE account. Whether you're a person with a disability, a family member, or a financial professional, this presentation will highlight the key benefits of ABLE accounts and how they can improve your financial future and quality of life.

John Finch ABLE United (850) 413-1411 john.finch@ableunited.com



#### **Active Kids Love to Zumba! (Ages 11 and Younger)**

Manatee Spring II Saturday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Music can be a great way to motivate children to move, listen and follow directions. Help your young child develop a healthy lifestyle and incorporate music and dancing as a natural part of their life. This class will teach caregivers how to incorporate music and dance into their everyday lives to build confidence while increasing self-esteem, memory, coordination and cultural awareness. This class session is for children with disabilities up to age 11 who are able to walk independently, along with their caregiver to assist in the session.

Paula Burns Burns Dance and Fitness (727) 900-5162 burnsdancefitness@gmail.com

#### **An Introduction to Understanding FASD**

Celebration 16 Saturday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Of all substances of abuse, alcohol causes the most serious long-term effects in a fetus, resulting in permanent brain damage. Many children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) go undiagnosed and suffer lifelong social challenges, serious mental health problems, and involvement with the juvenile justice system. Proper identification and intervention can help prevent many of these challenges. If you work professionally with children or are a foster care parent, knowing about the symptoms, developmental challenges, and appropriate interventions for children on the FASD spectrum is crucial. This session will help the attendee identify red flags and signs that may indicate that a child may have brain-based difficulties as a result of prenatal alcohol exposure. This presentation will also help attendees shift their perspective in order to begin to view social/emotional problems, difficult behaviors, and learning challenges of these individuals as a symptom of brain dysfunction and not willful defiance and opposition.

Pam Carver
The Florida Center

Kristal Pollack
The Florida Center



#### **Autism & The Law: Preparing Your Child with Autism for Law Enforcement Contact**

Bayhill 25 Saturday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Individuals on the autism spectrum are much more likely to come into contact with law enforcement officers than their peers. Are they ready for the contact? This breakout session will focus on what parents/caregivers can do to better prepare their children/adults on the spectrum for police interaction.

Donna Lorman Autism Society of Greater Orlando dlorman@asgo.org

Hector Gonzalez Bal Harbour Police Department (305) 866-4633 hgonzalez@balharbourfl.gov Christopher Gonzalez

Drew Lorman Autism Society of Greater Orlando (407) 855-0235 dlorman@asgo.org



#### **Breaking Barriers: Empowering Nonspeakers with Autism to Shape Their Future**

Celebration 5 Saturday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Autistics who cannot speak are misunderstood and underestimated; yet that's now changing as thousands of Nonspeakers show the world how intelligent they are by typing. Elizabeth Bonker learned to type at age 5. Now a nonprofit leader and global advocate, her story has been profiled in books, articles, and films. Elizabeth will share her personal journey and work through Communication 4 ALL (C4A) to ensure that all Nonspeakers have access to communication and education. Join her to learn how pioneering C4A initiatives are leveraging technology to teach Nonspeakers how to type and help anyone with Autism better regulate themselves.

Elizabeth Bonker
Communication 4 ALL
(973) 903-5098
elizabeth@communication4ALL.org

#### **Cerebral Palsy Roundtable**

Manatee Spring I Saturday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Are you looking for a chance to network with other families? This is a chance for families to connect with each other and share their experiences. Sometimes, the best education you can get is from another parent or caregiver. If you'd like to talk about your experience with cerebral palsy, join us for this informal conversation.

Catherine Seacrist Carver (954) 632-0510 cathybear143@aol.com



# Child Support for the Special Needs Adult Child Bayhill 21 Saturday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

This session delves into the complexities of child support for special needs children, focusing on Florida Statute 61.1255 and its implications for families with dependent adult children. The statute addresses support for individuals diagnosed with a developmental or physical disability before the age of 18 who cannot live independently or maintain substantial, gainful employment. Parents of these individuals can petition the court for support but must be appointed as a guardian advocate, legal quardian, or hold power of attorney to access funds. Alternatively, support can be allocated through a special needs trust to ensure the adult child's needs are met. Notably, the statute does not prescribe strict guidelines for support amounts, relying instead on the child's needs and the parents' ability to pay. The legislative intent behind Statute 61.1255 is to provide financial safeguards for dependent adult children while preserving their eligibility for means-based government benefits, such as Medicaid or Supplemental Security Income (SSI). This balance is critical to ensure that court-ordered support enhances the child's quality of life without jeopardizing their access to essential programs and services. The court holds broad powers in these cases, including establishing, modifying, or enforcing support orders. Courts can also impose restrictions on how support payments are used, ensuring they directly benefit the dependent adult child. When determining support amounts, courts consider several factors, such as the child's specific needs, the parents' financial capacity, and the potential impact of support payments on the child's eligibility for government benefits. A significant feature of the statute is the potential assignment of support payments to a special needs trust. This arrangement protects the funds and ensures they are used exclusively for the child's benefit. Furthermore, courts must evaluate the impact of support on current and anticipated government programs to avoid disqualifying the child from essential benefits. This careful consideration underscores the importance of aligning financial support with long-term planning for the child's welfare. Restrictions on support cases are also crucial. Courts are mandated to ensure that support orders do not interfere with programs or services the dependent adult child currently utilizes or is expected to qualify for in the future. By prioritizing the child's participation in these programs, the statute aims to provide a stable and secure framework for their care. This session highlights the critical legal and financial considerations involved in child support cases for special needs children. By understanding the provisions of Statute 61.1255, parents and guardians can effectively navigate the legal system to secure financial support while safeguarding their child's access to government benefits and services. The statute's flexibility and emphasis on the child's unique needs provide a tailored approach to ensuring their well-being and quality of life.

Veronica Robinson Law Offices of E.F. Robinson, P.A. (754) 434-1176 vrobinson@efrobinson.law

Crystal Frazier-Womack African-American Advocacy Center for Persons with Disabilities Andrew Gelin

African-American Advocacy Center for Persons with

Disabilities

Kaiir Harriott

African-American Advocacy Center for Persons with

Disabilities

Alexandre Gelin

#### **Creating Pathways for Success for Special Needs Latino Students**

Celebration 1 Saturday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

As the number of Spanish-speaking children with special needs enrolling in schools continues to rise, their families often encounter unique challenges. This presentation will examine the specific difficulties faced by Spanish-speaking parents of children with disabilities, including their experiences with denial and grief. I will explore the cultural beliefs and barriers that can impede parents from fully accepting their child's disability and accessing crucial resources. Emphasizing the importance of collaboration, I will discuss how effective partnerships between parents and school staff can create a nurturing environment that supports the success of every child. Lastly, I will highlight the essential role of advocates during the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process, detailing how they can help secure vital services and support within both the school and the wider community. Together, we can work towards a brighter future for these students and their families.

**Evelyn Roman-Santos** 



#### **DIR Floortime at Home: Sensory Strategies for Successful Transitions**

Bayhill 31-32 Saturday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Transitions can be challenging for individuals with neurodiverse needs. This interactive session will equip caregivers with practical DIR Floortime techniques and sensory strategies to support smoother transitions at home and in the community. Learn how tools like singing, bubbles, and gross motor activities can foster emotional regulation during mealtimes, bath time, car rides, and outings. Resources will be shared to help caregivers adapt these strategies for young children, teens, and adults, creating personalized approaches that promote independence, reduce stress, and strengthen connections through sensory-based interventions.

Janine Stewart Easterseals Florida (813) 236-5589 jstewart@fl.easterseals.com Jenn Siffermann Easterseals Florida (561) 725-4444 jsiffermann@fl.easterseals.com



#### **Early Steps SWFL & Gulf Central Playgroup**

Coral Spring Saturday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Playgroups are designed to help children learn and develop new skills in areas such as language, cognition, motor skills and sensory. Playgroups also provide opportunities for families to interact with their children and build relationships with other children and caregivers.

Imperia Torres
Florida Department of Health,
Children's Medical Services,
Early Steps Program
(239) 292-2995
Imperiatorres@hpcswf.com

Nelsy Crowell
Gulf Central Early Steps
nelsycrowell@hpcswf.com

Lizeth Navarro Florida Department of Health, Children's Medical Services, Early Steps Program





#### **Emergency Preparedness for People with Access and Functional Needs**

Bayhill 20 Saturday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

This session will provide information on services and resources to help prepare Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) families for disaster-related emergencies and address the individualized, unique challenges faced by military families who have members with special needs.

Ta'Nashea McLeod MacDill AFB Angela Ocampo MacDill AFB Shalanda Wideman MacDill AFB



Explore how smart home technology can enhance independence, safety, and convenience for individuals of all abilities. This session will showcase accessible devices and systems that can automate everyday tasks, improve communication, and increase control over the home environment. From voice-activated assistants to adaptive appliances, discover practical solutions to create a more independent and connected lifestyle.

Eric Reed Florida Alliance for Assistive Services & Technology (850) 487-3278 ereed@faast.org Kailey Medlock Florida Alliance for Assistive Services & Technology (850) 766-8703 kmedlock@faast.org

#### Florida Division of Blind Services (DBS)

Bayhill 22 Saturday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

The session will focus on providing a synopsis of the various programs offered by the agency, the application process, eligibility criteria, and services. The Florida Division of Blind Services helps blind and visually impaired individuals achieve their goals and live their lives with as much independence and self-direction as possible. The agency accomplishes its mission for a barrier-free environment in partnership with others. The objective will be to share information about our Blind Babies, Children's Program, Pre-ETS, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Adult and Older Blind Independent Living Programs.

Mireya Hernandez Florida Department of Education, Division of Blind Services (813) 871-7190 mireya.hernandez@dbs.fldoe.org



#### For ALL the People: Empowering Families to Drive Legislative Change

Celebration 14-15 Saturday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

This session will showcase the remarkable success of "We the People," a family-run, family-driven advocacy group uniting Florida families with developmental disabilities to create meaningful change. By fostering personal connections with legislators through powerful storytelling, this initiative has amplified the voices of hundreds of families, resulting in improved supports and services statewide. The group's efforts have already influenced policy discussions, helped eliminate barriers for families, and highlighted the urgent needs of the disability community. Participants will learn how to replicate this success by crafting compelling one-page stories, effectively engaging lawmakers, and building a community-led movement for advocacy.

Stephanie Nordin We the People, By the People, For All the People (239) 595-1971 Stephanie@autismcollier.com



This presentation is for family members who are exploring how to start and/or improve a family-run organization. We will begin with a brief overview and update regarding FROM (Family-Run Organization Movement), including an introduction to the FROM Guidebook, which is a resource that family members can use to enhance their organization-building efforts. The majority of our time will then be spent using the Guidebook, with a focus on situation analysis, and building a Board. Practice by using the tools that are in the Guidebook, and receive a free copy of the Guidebook to take with you.

John Ferrone
Ferrone Associates
(402)4620244
iferrone@ferroneassociates.com

Joe McCann The Family Café (850) 224-4670 imccann@familycafe.net

#### **Hope in Action: The Hope Florida Initiative**

Bayhill 24 Saturday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

In Fall 2023, First Lady Casey DeSantis announced the expansion of Hope Florida to serve individuals with disabilities. This powerful panel will feature APD Hope Navigators, who will share firsthand accounts and inspiring testimonials about the program's impact across the state. Through a unique model of personalized support and community collaboration, Hope Florida empowers individuals by helping them identify their personal goals, remove barriers, and create a customized plan for achieving independence and integration. Join us as we explore how this initiative is transforming lives and helping Floridians realize their full potential.

Rachel Ritter
Agency for Persons with Disabilities
Rachel.Ritter@apdcares.org

Natasha Simon
Agency for Persons with Disabilities
Agency for Persons with Disabilities
Agency for Persons with Disabilities
Denise Lopez
Agency for Persons with Disabilities
Denise.Lopez@apdcares.org

#### Inter-abled Marriage: Balancing Love and Being a Full-Time Caregiver

Celebration 7 Saturday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Join Amanda Steijlen and her husband Michael Steijlen for a discussion on the dynamics of a spouse being a full-time caregiver. They will share their personal journey through their inter-abled relationship, highlighting the joys and challenges of balancing caregiving responsibilities with maintaining a strong partnership. Attendees will learn valuable strategies for dating with a disability, communication, and self-care in caregiving relationships.

Amanda Steijlen Wheely Big Dreams (727) 389-9679 inquiries@amandasteijlen.com

Michael Steijlen



# Involving Dads: How to Encourage and Support Involvement by Dads Bayhill 17 Saturday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

This workshop is designed to help moms, significant others, families, and professionals understand the issues that may impact involvement by fathers, to help participants recognize and identify specific reasons a dad may not be participating, and to identify strategies for participants to use in helping fathers become more involved in their children's lives.

Mark Keith
Resource Materials and Technology Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (904) 827-2731
mark.keith@rmtcdhh.org

## Lab: Let's Make a Snack: Independent Living Skills Lab for Children with Visual or Dual Sensory Impairment

Celebration 12-13 Saturday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Mealtimes can be a time for gathering more than just nutrients. For children with visual impairments, this is the perfect time to learn skills like scooping, stirring, spreading, measuring, recipe following, and early math skills. With some simple accommodations, children with visual impairments can learn to make their own snacks and meals. In this lab the children are chefs and the judges as they taste their creations.

Tiffany Conrad	Sue Glaser	Cheri Hart	Andrea Wallace
Florida Instructional	Florida Instructional	Florida Instructional	Florida Instructional
Materials Center for the			
Visually Impaired	Visually Impaired	Visually Impaired	Visually Impaired

#### Medicare, Medicaid, and You

Bayhill 18

Saturday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

What are the differences between Medicare and Medicaid, and how do they work together to support people with disabilities? Attend this session to find out!

**Greg Neeley** 

#### **Most Significant Cognitive Disability**

Celebration 8

Saturday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

This session will go over the definition of the most signficant cognitive disability in accordance with Rule 6A-1.0943, Florida Administrative Code (FAC) and describe the requirements needed for a student to participate in the Florida Alternate Assessment and Access Points - Alternate Academic Achievement Standards (AP-AAAS).

Cheyenne Poliquin

Carrie Pigott

Florida Department of Education, Bureau of

Exceptional Education and Student Services

Carrie Pigott

Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional

Education and Student Services





## Networking Session: Introduction to Family Leadership with the Florida Family Leaders Network

Barrel Spring I Saturday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Curious about how to make an impact for children and youth with special health care needs? This networking session hosted by the Florida Family Leaders Network is a great place to start. We will explore how family members and young adults can turn lived experiences into leadership. You will connect with others who share your interests, discover ways to lend your voice, and learn about opportunities to get involved. Whether you are new to the idea of family leadership or already engaged, join us to see how your experiences can inspire meaningful change in your community for children and youth with special health care needs.

Andrea Hickson Florida Family Leaders' Network (954) 608-4052 andrea.hickson@flhealth.gov

#### Share Your Story: No Matter How You Tell It, Your Stories Change the World!

Plaza International Ballroom Saturday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Author and disability journalist Melissa Hart shows you how people with Down syndrome all over the world are helping to improve their life and the lives of their peers through storytelling. You'll learn how to write opinion pieces for magazines and newspapers, how to write and publish a book, how to break into public speaking, how to do stand-up comedy that explores social justice issues, and how to harness the power of social media to educate the public and advocate for your rights - all while having fun with your family and friends!

Melissa Hart Source Books melissahartsmith@gmail.com



#### Special Needs Planning: How to Make Sure You Have a Comprehensive Plan that Works

Celebration 10 Saturday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Imagine you are challenged not only with your day-to-day responsibilities but also with the uncertainty of what the future holds. Many disabled children require assistance through their whole lives, even after their parent has retired or passed away. Let our experts guide you on securing your family's future with a well developed special needs plan, as well as protecting your retirement needs. This workshop will provide an overview of the key components of special needs planning and financial management. Topics will include government benefits (and their disqualifications), trust planning, guardianship, ABLE accounts, and more. You will gain substantial knowledge of how to navigate common issues as well as how to successfully retire and secure a comprehensive plan to take care of your family's needs.

Craig Eppy Levanti Wealth (561) 287-7915 craig@levantiwealth.com Coley Quinn Levanti Wealth

#### Start the Year Off Right: 7 Essential Back-to-School Tips for Families of Students with Disabilities

Bayhill 29-30

Saturday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

This presentation aims to equip families of students with disabilities with practical strategies to ensure a smooth and successful transition back to school. The session will provide actionable tips and resources for families to share with others in order to foster positive relationships to support students with disabilities.

Jennifer Wardally FIN (850) 645-7593 jwardally@contactfin.com Brandi Lefevre FIN blefevre@contactfin.com



## **Supported Employment: Building Career Pathways for Individuals with Most Significant Disabilities**

Celebration 6 Saturday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Employment is a key step toward independence. This session highlights Vocational Rehabilitation programs that empower individuals with most significant disabilities, whether they be physical, cognitive, or mental health-related, to achieve successful employment.

Veronica Ebuen Florida Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (904) 365-2729 veronica.ebuen@vr.fldoe.org Mirna Diaz Florida Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (407) 897-2731 mirna.diaz@vr.fldoe.org

#### **Supporting Neurodivergent College Students: A Parent's Journey**

Bayhill 28 Saturday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

When my daughter, diagnosed with autism and ADHD, transitioned to college, we faced hurdles in money management, time management, social challenges, and medication routines. Music, her passion since childhood, became her anchor. With determination and adjustments, she graduated magna cum laude and earned a master's in violin performance. This session shares her inspiring journey and practical strategies that helped her succeed in both undergraduate and graduate school. Parents will gain insights on advocacy, navigating transitions, and fostering independence, empowering them to support their children's dreams and unlock their potential in higher education and beyond.

Sandra Rancano SofistyKat Strings



#### Transition Planning from High School: How to Plan and What You Should Know

Celebration 2 Saturday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

This presentation will provide an overview on what a student with a disability needs to consider when planning their transition from high school. We will cover the different options and considerations to prepare the student for life after high school and adulthood, including education, employment, and self-determination. This presentation will be interactive and open to questions from the participants. Session participants will also receive a copy of the Transition Toolkit and instructions on how to access the guide through Disability Rights Florida's website.

Ann Siegel
Disability Rights Florida
(850) 488-9071
anns@disabilityrightsflorida.org

Nately Alvarez Disability Rights Florida (850) 488-9071 natelya@disabilityrightsflorida.org



#### **Understanding Florida's Mental Health System**

Bayhill 27 Saturday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Florida's mental health system is made up of many different agencies, places, and providers. This can make it hard to understand what kinds of services are available for you and your family. It can also make it confusing to know who to contact when you have questions or concerns about service provision. This presentation will provide an overview of which state agencies are part of Florida's mental health system, where you and your family may receive services, and who to contact when you need help. Engaging activities and the chance to ask questions will leave participants better equipped to navigate Florida's mental health system.

Aaron Victoria
Disability Rights Florida
(850) 617-9777
aaronv@disabilityrightsflorida.org

Melissa Cyril Disability Rights Florida

#### Understanding the Link: Alzheimer's and Dementia Risk Among Individuals with Disabilities

Bayhill 26 Saturday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

This presentation will explore the heightened risk of Alzheimer's disease and dementia in individuals with disabilities. Drawing on 35 years of nursing experience, including a decade specializing in dementia care, I will discuss the unique challenges faced by this vulnerable population. Attendees will gain insights into the biological, environmental, and social factors contributing to this increased risk, aiming to improve awareness and support for caregivers and families navigating these complex health issues

Colleen McGrew Onyx Home Care (386) 230-9430 colleen@onyxhomecare.com

#### Using the 'Working with Case Managers' Guide to Assess Case Management Quality

Bayhill 19

Saturday, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Do you know what you can expect of your waiver support coordinator, care manager, or other case management professional? The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council (FDDC) recently developed the 'Working with Case Managers' guide. The Guide identifies the key skills of case managers and has surveys that can help you to assess how your case manager is meeting your needs. During this session, we will review the key skills of case managers, how you can use the Guide to assess your case management services, and strategies for sharing feedback on your case manager's performance.

Diane Beaver Mathematica (630) 995-0218 DBeaver@mathematica-mpr.com

12:30 pm to 1:00 pm	Performance by the Pyramid Players, Regency Rotunda
1:00 pm to 1:30 pm	Performance by Radiant Voices, Plaza Pre-Function

1:30 pm to 3:00 pm Keynote Address by Kenny Taylor with Cesily Collette Taylor,

**Plaza International Ballroom** 

**2:00 pm to 3:00 pm**ABLE United Q&A: Meet the Director, Silver Spring II **3:00 pm to 3:30 pm**ABLE United Q&A: Meet the Director, Silver Spring II
Performance by the Pyramid Players, Regency Rotunda

**3:00 pm to 3:30 pm** Red Carpet Experience, Conference Level

#### 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm CONCURRENT SESSIONS



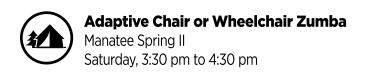
#### **A Military Family at War**

Bayhill 20 Saturday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

As General Hartsell and Melisa know, disability is an issue that impacts military families in profound ways. Please join us for a conversation about a military family's disability experience from a personal perspective. In addition to discussing the unique challenges facing military and veterans' families that include people with disabilities, the Hartsells will also share their family's personal experience. Together they will talk about their experience raising their son Evin, with muscular dystrophy, who passed away in 2018 (age 28) and their efforts to continue his legacy through the work of the Evin B. Hartsell Foundation and their disability awareness education efforts.

Melisa Hartsell Evin B. Hartsell Foundation Gen. James Hartsell Evin B. Hartsell Foundation Alex Hartsell Evin B. Hartsell Foundation





Physical activity need not be strenuous to achieve health benefits. People with disabilities and their caregivers often avoid exercise because they think there will be no use if they are not sweating and keeping up with everyone else. This class session will be designed to exercise while sitting in a chair or wheelchair. Zumba is an international dance program for all ages and all ability levels. Zumba is often referred to as "exercise in disguise." You will have so much fun enjoying the music vou will forget you are exercising!

Paula Burns **Burns Dance and Fitness** (727) 900-5162 burnsdancefitness@gmail.com

#### **Bridging the Gap: Bringing Health Care Transition into the Conversation**

Celebration 16 Saturday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

There is an overwhelming amount of change happening in adolescents' lives as they move into young adulthood. There is also an overwhelming amount of change happening in their families' lives! Sometimes the fact that health care will change is overlooked. In Bridging the Gap, we introduce what Health Care Transition is and then how important it is to employment, education, self-advocacy, independent living and more. We actually believe health and a successful health care transition can be foundational to success in the other areas of transition.

Timothy Markle Forgiveness Factor (608) 262-8033 tim@forgivenessfactor.org



#### **Caregiver Fatigue: The Hidden Burden**

Bayhill 27 Saturday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Many individuals who either work as caregivers or are an essential element in the daily quality of life for others are so concentrated on their passion for caring they forget the importance of self-care. Caregiver fatigue is a state of physical exhaustion that can occur when caregivers give too much of themselves without replenishing their well-being. It can impact the ability to care for themselves and the person they are caring for. This presentation will review this real phenomenon, explain how and why it occurs, the symptomology, and ways to mitigate it.

Milton Montes De Oca **Empathy & Hope Counseling Services** 

#### **Combating Human Trafficking: Equipping Individuals & Activating Community**

Bayhill 24 Saturday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Human Trafficking is one of the most egregious forms of abuse and exploitation. Florida is committed to combating human trafficking. Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities are at a higher risk of becoming victims. This presentation will raise awareness of the warning signs and how you can report suspicions of human trafficking.

Jennifer Maloney Agency for Persons with Disabilities jennifer.maloney@apdcares.org Janette Canas Agency for Persons with Disabilities janette.canas@apdcares.org



### Disability Rights Compensatory Education: What Is It? Do You Need It?

Celebration 8 Saturday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

This session will help attendees to understand what compensatory education is and the different ways in which it may be provided and calculated. We will discuss when and why your child may be entitled to compensatory education and have a brief overview of some related services that may be provided as compensatory education. We will explore compensatory education in light of on-going provider shortages and explore hypotheticals of cases when compensatory education has been requested and their outcomes.

Karem Castane-Blanco Disability Rights Florida (850) 488-9071 karemc@disabilityrightsflorida.org



# Developing an Individual Disaster Plan (IDP) and Successfully Working With Your Local Emergency Management

Bayhill 19 Saturday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

The recent fires in Southern California and their tragic impacts once again highlight the fact that individuals with disabilities are disproportionately likely to suffer injury or even die in disasters. Hearing about the father who died along with his son with CP, or of the person who was blind and autistic who also perished, need to be a call to action for all parties. Many of us are familiar with the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) that is a written plan that describes the special education services and accommodations a student needs. Maybe we need to start talking about developing IDPs, Individualized Disaster Plans that identify the support and services individuals would need during a disaster or emergency. Concurrently, it is important to understand the challenges that local emergency managers face and how building relationships and communication with them can mitigate the challenges that individuals with disabilities face.

Inaki Rezola Southern Glazer's Wine and Spirits (954) 320-9130 inaki.rezola@sgws.com



The first three years of a child's life are crucial for development. Early Intervention can transform lives by nurturing strengths and addressing unique needs. This presentation explores Early Steps, Florida's approach to early intervention, its impactful supports, and how it empowers families to guide their child's developmental journey.

Maria Cadigan Florida Department of Health, Children's Medical Services, Early Steps Program (941) 957-8864 Mariacadigan@hpcswf.com Claudia Lawler Florida Department of Health, Children's Medical Services. Early Steps Program

#### Early Tactile & Braille Literacy in the Home for Children with Visual or Dual Sensory Impairment

Celebration 12-13 Saturday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

This presentation will provide families with a brief overview of braille and tactile skills. It will include practical strategies and techniques for implementing and infusing beginning tactile literacy skills into their home and daily routines.

Cheri Hart

Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually Impaired



#### **Empowering Independence: Florida's IDD Pilot Program in Action**

Florida A Saturday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Florida Community Care (FCC) is the managed care plan selected by the state to operate Florida's first pilot program for adults (18+) with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). This session will highlight how the program is improving the lives of individuals by coordinating access to medical, behavioral, and long-term care services — including pharmacy, meals, transportation, and more. FCC's leadership team will share insights from the field, explain how the program works, and discuss how it may shape the future of IDD care across Florida. Whether you're a family member, caregiver, provider, or advocate, this session will help you understand how FCC is working to support independence, choice, and well-being.

Carol Gormley Kali Wilson Tatiana Pita Maria Devisme

Florida Community Care Florida Community Care Florida Community Care Florida Community Care





#### **Essential Legal Planning for Special Needs Families**

Bayhill 21 Saturday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Estate planning in general can be complicated to most families. Adding into the mix a family member with special needs can make the process seem overwhelming. Knowing where to start, and how to methodically approach the plan, can make a daunting task less intimidating. We will discuss what makes families with a special

needs member different, and also reassure them that they aren't alone and there are answers. Wills, powers of attorney, special needs trusts, public benefits, and guardianship will all be discussed.

Travis Finchum Special Needs Lawyers, P.A. (727) 443-7898 Travis@specialneedslawyers.com

#### Familia CHARGE- como ayudar a nuestras familias Hispanas

Bayhill 26 Saturday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

El sindrome CHARGE es una condicion genetica que afecta la vision, audicion y presenta muchas otras complicaciones medicas. Es comun que nuestras familias se sientan solas por la poca concientizacion que hay acerca de esta condicion. A la misma vez, es mas dificil para nuestras familias Hispanoablantes. En esta presentacion vamos a compartir estrategias de como promover la union y collaboracion de nuestras familias a traves del mundo. Tambien ofreceremos la oportunidad a los participantes para compartir sus recursos, y otras cosas que han sido utiles para ellos. Juntos somos mas fuertes!

CHARGE Syndrome is a rare genetic condition affecting hearing, vision, and numerous medical challenges. Families facing this diagnosis often experience isolation due to a lack of awareness about CHARGE and its educational and medical complexities. This sense of isolation is even greater for non-English-speaking families, who may have limited access to vital resources and support. In this presentation, we will share our experiences and strategies for effectively engaging Spanish-speaking families worldwide. Through \*\*Familia CHARGE\*\*, a virtual support group, we've created initiatives that empower and connect this unique population. We will highlight the group's evolution and the key steps we've taken to bridge language and cultural gaps. By attending, participants will gain valuable insights and practical tools to adapt their approaches, ensuring they better connect and support non-English-speaking families with loved ones with CHARGE Syndrome. Participants will be encouraged to share their own personal tips and resources that can help the group. Together we are stronger!

Lourdes Quintana PEPSA



# Finding Purpose and Joy: A Guide for Caregivers and Individuals with Disabilities to Thrive Beyond Trauma

Celebration 1 Saturday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Caregivers and wheelchair users alike face unique challenges, but together, we can create something extraordinary. Join Meridith Alexander, a world-class coach and keynote speaker, and her daughter Schuyler "Sachi" Arakawa, Ms. Wheelchair Florida 2025, for an inspiring and joy-filled session designed to empower, connect, and celebrate the unsung heroes of resilience: caregivers and wheelchair warriors.

Schuyler Arakawa Schuyler.arakawa@gmail.com Meredith Hankenson Alexander meridithactsinc@gmail.com

#### Fragile X Syndrome (FXS) Roundtable

Barrel Spring II Saturday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Fragile-X Syndrome diagnosis -- confused? Feeling isolated? Come meet other families. Share your experiences or just listen. Missy Zolecki, Director of Community Empowerment for the National Fragile X Foundation (NFXF), will share information about resources and supports from the NFXF. Betsy and Eden Fulmer, a mother-daughter team, will share their experience from diagnosis as a youngster to amazing adulthood 30 years later. Missy is also the parent of a young adult living with Fragile X syndrome. They will encourage you to share your journey as well. You'll find you're not alone. Fragile X Syndrome is a genetic disorder that can cause intellectual disability, behavioral and learning disabilities. Come join us.

Betsy Fulmer Eden Fulmer

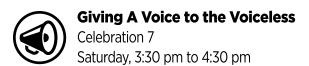
#### From Ocean Life to Music: How Our Childhood Special Interests on the Spectrum Led to Career Paths

Bayhill 33

Saturday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Our joint multimedia presentation will share with the Family Cafe audience how our special interests growing up on the autism spectrum helped shape our career paths as young adults. Through telling our life stories enhanced with colorful photographs, entertaining videos, and original songs, we will demonstrate to families and teachers that honing the special interests of neurodiverse children can ultimately enrich their lives, shape their future, empower them, help build social relationships, and break stereotypes. Whether their interest is in visual arts, music, or natural sciences, it provides one with a unique opportunity for self-expression, self-fulfillment and enhancing one's self-worth.

Larissa Grabois Larissa G. Music (201) 966-0862 lara.grabois@gmail.com Ori Shem-Tov (201) 280-1405 Orishemtov13@gmail.com



I am a journalist and blogger who created the blog The Voiceless Minority in April 2013. The blog started out as a way for me to personally deal with the struggles and discrimination I was facing throughout graduate school. I have a disability known as spastic quadriplegic cerebral palsy. I have always been passionate about the place people with disabilities occupy in not only American society but the world as a whole. Our disabilities are often considered before our humanity. So, although I started the blog to deal with issues I faced through grad school, it was transformed into an overall commentary on the place people with disabilities, or as I like to call them, "The Voiceless Minority," face in modern life. I call us the Voiceless Minority not because people with disabilities don't have voices, but rather because I believe, except for a small portion of society, nobody listens to people with disabilities. The goal of this presentation will be to give an overall history of the blog and my struggles, but primarily, it will serve to empower people with disabilities and other audience participants to take their place in the voiceless minority and make us no longer voiceless. I plan to highlight key blogs that have gotten lots of traction on my website and introduce guest writers who have written on the blog, including Michelle Zeman and

Samantha Lebron. I'll also show the audience where to access the blog and how to get involved with the movement of the voiceless minority.

Jason Hahr The Voiceless Minority (814) 403-3437 jasonhahr@gmail.com Samantha Lebron

Michelle Zeman VTCC (407) 919-3629 michellezemanbcba@gmail.com

#### **Grieving the Diagnosis**

Celebration 14-15 Saturday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

This presentation offers a compassionate and empowering journey through the emotional challenges faced when a loved one is diagnosed with a special need. Acknowledging the natural grief process, it provides insight into navigating the complex emotions of acceptance, adaptation, and hope. Participants will discover actionable steps to persevere through these challenges, focusing on building resilience, embracing the new normal, and finding joy amid adversity. Additionally, this session equips community members, such as teachers, ministry leaders, and other supporters, with practical strategies to provide meaningful encouragement, understanding, and partnership. Attendees will leave with tools to foster growth, create a supportive environment, and build stronger connections with families navigating this journey.

Jeanetta Bryant Abilities Workshop, Inc. (407) 951-6117 Jeanetta@AbilitiesWorkshop.com

## Helping Families Understand the Benefits of Student Participation in the Individual Education Plan (IEP) Meeting

Bayhill 29-30 Saturday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

This session introduces Project 10's new publication, "Helping Families Understand the Benefits of Student Participation in the Individual Education Plan (IEP) Meeting." The session will explore strategies to prepare students for meaningful growth through IEP participation and guide families in supporting their students as they build essential skills in self-advocacy, self-determination, self-esteem, social interaction, problem-solving, and decision-making.



#### Mesa Redonda sobre Autismo

Coral Spring Saturday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Conectarse con alguien que realmente comprende su camino puede ser una de las formas más impactantes de encontrar recursos y apoyo como padre o cuidador de un niño en el espectro del autismo. Esta sesión ofrece una oportunidad única para establecer redes, no solo con los anfitriones, sino también con otros asistentes, fomentando una comunidad de experiencias compartidas y estrategias comprobadas. Ya sea que sea nuevo en la crianza de un niño con autismo o que esté enfrentando un desafío específico, esta sesión podría brindarle la orientación y las conexiones que necesita. Únase a nosotros para construir relaciones significativas y descubrir información valiosa.

Cindy Borroto (305) 300-8410 cindy1231@bellsouth.net Maureen Morris (941) 380-4676 Solarflair1@comcast.net

#### Moving Beyond Inclusion: Advocating for Your Child's Rightful Presence in Education

Bayhill 28 Saturday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Discover how to advocate for more than just inclusion in your child's education. This session explores the concept of rightful presence, where children with disabilities are valued as authentic members of their school community rather than simply being placed in classrooms. Learn practical strategies for working with schools to create environments where your child can truly belong, thrive, and be their authentic self.

Latina Nickelson SOAR Educational Services (407) 593-4487 info@soareduservices.com



#### New: An Augmentative Alternative Communication Tablet Phone, FREE from FTRI!

Celebration 9 Saturday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

For the first time, FTRI is offering a tablet-connected phone compatible with ACC apps like Proloquo2Go, Proloquo4Text, TouchChat HD with Word Power, CoughDrop, Speech Assistant, and more. This phone-tablet combo is available to qualified residents aged 3 and older. Also new is the Clarity Caption Tablet Phone, which works without an Internet connection. This session will introduce these exciting additions and showcase FTRI's full range of assistive telecommunications technology for hearing loss. Attendees will learn how these devices work, and explore multiple ways to access this free, statewide service.

Elissa Moran Florida Telecommunications Relay (850) 329-8227 emoran@ftri.org



#### Preparing for Retirement - Are You Ready to Write your Retirement Story?

Celebration 3-4 Saturday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

The presentation is designed for pre-retirees that are within 10 years of retirement with a focus on the need to plan for support of an additional lifespan, their special someone. Topics will include strategies on how to repurpose and/or re-age a portion of their retirement nest egg for a non-taxable distribution to their heirs.

Chris Hunter
The Pienkosz Financial Group of Wells Fargo Advisors
(407) 649-6026
Chris.Hunter@WFA.com

Greg Pienkosz
The Pienkosz Financial Group of Wells Fargo Advisors



#### **Promoting Social-Emotional Development through Child-Directed Play**

Celebration 10 Saturday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Child-directed play goes beyond just being an activity for children; it's an opportunity for deep emotional connection, mutual respect, and personal growth. By stepping back and allowing the child to take the lead, adults foster a rich, supportive environment where the child feels empowered, understood, and valued. It's through this kind of play that social-emotional skills, such as self-regulation, empathy, and social awareness, can develop in ways that are organic, meaningful, and deeply connected to the child's inner world.

Amanda Lopez Easterseals Florida Jenn Siffermann Easterseals Florida



# **Ready, Set, Work!**Celebration 6 Saturday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

So you want to find a job . . . what do you need to know? Stop and take inventory of yourself. What are your interests and skills? In this interactive presentation, we will share some tips on job search skills and sites, the top 10 questions interviewers ask, and how to respond. We will also help you review your online presence to make it job ready. Just as important as getting a job are the soft skills to help you stay employed. We will also discuss tips on financial literacy and some skills to help you prepare for independence. So join us to get ready and set to work!

**Emily Taylor-Snell** 



#### Social Security Presents: Why Use Social Security's Online Services?

Celebration 5 Saturday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Social Security has provided financial protection for our nation's people for nearly 90 years. Chances are, you either receive Social Security benefits or know someone who does. With retirement, disability, and survivors' benefits, Social Security is one of the most successful anti-poverty programs in our nation's history. We are passionate about helping you by delivering financial support, providing superior customer service, and ensuring the security of your information - helping you secure today and tomorrow. This informational session will highlight the convenience of our online services. With Social Security's online platform, you can manage your business from anywhere and on any device. Whether you are applying for a replacement social security card, retirement benefits, disability benefits, Supplemental Security Income, or Medicare, our services are designed for your ease. If you are a representative payee, you can utilize your personal my Social Security account to access the representative payee portal, allowing you to manage business for the beneficiaries you assist. Explore our online service options that removed the need for in-person visits.

Angela Love Social Security Administration

Danielle West-Lane Social Security Administration Tina Williams
Social Security Administration

Dorothy Bailey Social Security Administration



Do you want to meet a new friend? Do you enjoy karaoke? Do you enjoy playing board games? Come join the FYC at our first annual FYC after-hours meet and greet where you can meet other youth with disabilities like you in a social environment filled with games and activities. Come get to know us and let us get to know you!

Shevie Barnes Florida Youth Council shevie@floridayouthcouncil.org



#### Thriving, Not Surviving, as a Special Needs Parents

Bayhill 17 Saturday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Parenting special needs children is a joy, and let's be real honest. It comes with challenges that only those who are living it understand. Some parents check out, marriages fall apart, and the child is uncared for. Others learn to thrive and find the joy. Learn how to go beyond survival to thriving as a special needs parent.

Richard Mull Operation Light Force (813) 817-1651 operationlightforce@gmail.com

#### **Understanding Sensory Challenges**

Bayhill 25 Saturday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

This presentation will help parents understand sensory challenges in children and provide effective strategies for support. We explore the difference between sensory responses and behavior responses and interventions for both. We will explore the key differences between sensory responses and behavioral responses, along with appropriate interventions for each.

Melissa Call Matthew Take

Florida Diagnostic & Learning Resources System

John Love Elementary #73A

#### When It Is Not "Just Down Syndrome": How to Be a Good Medical Advocate for Your Loved One

Bayhill 18

Saturday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

This presentation will focus on how to find your voice and become a strong medical advocate for your loved one with Down syndrome or other disability. Presenters represent a pediatrician and social worker at a Down Syndrome medical clinic and parent of an adult with Down Syndrome. The presentation will review chronic medical conditions, navigating the types of medical specialist, and the value of having a good primary care doctor and team. Personal stories will be shared describing when a parent first realizes their journey is not typical and how to recognize that "you're not crazy" when feeling something is not quite right. We will discuss how to collaborate with your medical team, how to navigate and keep track of multiple diagnoses, appointments, and care tasks, and learning how to prepare your child to become an active part in their care.

Tracy Pellegrino Stacy McConkey Advent Health (407) 609-4648

tracy.pellegrino@adventhealth.com Jenn Sikora



#### Why Work? An Employment Readiness Model for High School Students with Disabilities

Celebration 2 Saturday, 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

"Why Work? An Employment Readiness Model for High School Students with Disabilities" will showcase the Best Buddies Transition Program and its impact on empowering high school students to achieve post-secondary goals. This session will highlight key program components, including self-advocacy, job exploration, workplace readiness, work-based learning, and post-secondary counseling. Attendees will gain insights into the program's approach, with success stories illustrating its positive impact on students' transitions to employment and further education.

Daniella De La Riva Best Buddies in Central Florida (305) 992-2130 Danielladelariva@bestbuddies.org Brittany Bennett Best Buddies in Central Florida brittanybennett@bestbuddies.org

4:00 pm to 4:30 pmRed Carpet Experience, Conference Level4:00 pm to 5:00 pmDebunking Myths for ABLE Accounts, Silver Spring II4:30 pm to 5:00 pmPerformance by the Pyramid Players, Regency Rotunda

#### 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm CONCURRENT SESSIONS

#### 22q Roundtable

Barrel Spring II Saturday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Do you or someone you love have 22q11.2 Syndrome? Whether you know it as 22q, VCFS, DiGeorge, or Shprintzen Syndrome, it is now believed to be the second most common genetic syndrome (1:2,000 live births). Yet most people have never heard of it! Come talk with parents and people with 22q who will understand. We will share our experiences and help you answer questions, gather information, and meet others facing similar situations. Learn more about what the future holds for you or your loved one, while becoming part of our 22q family.

Maria Kneipple Florida Conquers 22q (305) 519-4059 miami22q@gmail.com Kristina Buchholz (561) 674-2530 kristinabuchholz@hotmail.com



#### A Horse, A Specialist, and Mental Wellness

Bayhill 27 Saturday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

We look forward to sharing the effective methods used in our Freedom Ride Wellness Program. These methods engage and enrich the lives of persons with disabilities and their caregivers. Utilizing the magic of horses, combined with the serenity of the outdoors, this program and the unique non-riding activities provide gentle feedback from horses and great experiential learning (self-awareness, self-esteem, social skills, coping, problem-solving, and goal setting). Our specialists will share the results of this program and client benefits for persons with disabilities, caregivers, veterans, youth, adults, families and corporate groups.

Jeannie Forthuber Freedom Ride (407) 341-0190 Jeannie519@gmail.com Rita Moore Freedom Ride (813) 335-6113 ritalmoorecoaching@gmail.com



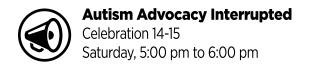


#### Aspiring Young Leaders Zumba Dance Party (Ages 15 - 30)

Manatee Spring II Saturday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Are you a young leader who likes to move and groove? If you can't wait to get on the dance floor any chance you get this is the perfect session for you. A career as a Zumba Instructor can be a perfect part-time gig to give you a little income and a fun career. Many youth with disabilities have become Zumba instructors because of their passion for movement and dance. This workshop will help show the basics of what it takes to become an instructor and as well as help you build confidence and leadership skills. Come join the fun!

Paula Burns Burns Dance and Fitness (727) 900-5162 burnsdancefitness@gmail.com John Burns



Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) advocacy is as diverse as the spectrum itself, with priorities spanning early interventions, healthcare, education, employment, and acceptance. This diversity enriches the community but can also lead to unintended conflicts, such as competing priorities, differing messaging, and representation challenges. "Autism Advocacy Interrupted" aims to address these complexities by fostering understanding and collaboration among self-advocates, families, and professionals. By examining advocacy strategies, unintended conflicts, and opportunities to build bridges, this discussion will explore how to amplify collective impact without overshadowing individual needs. This initiative will focus on creating a space for thoughtful dialogue and reflection. By addressing the challenges and opportunities within the advocacy landscape, participants will gain insights into fostering empathy, minimizing conflicts, and uniting diverse perspectives. The goal is to empower the autism community to work together more effectively for the benefit of all individuals with ASD.

Jeanetta Bryant Abilities Workshop, Inc. (407) 951-6117 Jeanetta@AbilitiesWorkshop.com

#### **Autism Roundtable**

Coral Spring Saturday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Connecting with someone who truly understands your journey can be one of the most impactful ways to find resources and support as a parent or caregiver of a child on the autism spectrum. This session offers a unique opportunity to network not only with the hosts but also with other attendees, fostering a community of shared experiences and proven strategies. Whether you're new to parenting a child with autism or navigating a specific challenge, this session could provide the guidance and connections you need. Join us to build meaningful relationships and discover valuable insights!

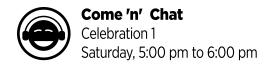
Cindy Borroto (305) 300-8410 cindy1231@bellsouth.net Maureen Morris (941) 380-4676 Solarflair1@comcast.net

#### **AutisMelodies: Learning and Growing with Music**

Bayhill 33 Saturday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Empowering children through creative expression, our collaborative presentation, combines music and storytelling with the goal of helping children with special needs learn and grow. Larissa Grabois' vividly illustrated original song lyric books promote self-acceptance, empathy, and empowerment through catchy and rhyming songs. Similarly, Kate Gladstone's songs about handwriting foster creativity, fine motor skills, and motivation. Together, we'll showcase how music and multi-sensory learning experiences can build confidence, encourage self-expression, and support children's overall development.

Kate Gladstone Handwriting Repair (518) 928-8101 kate@readcursivefast.com Larissa Grabois Larissa G. Music (201) 966-0862 lara.grabois@gmail.com



Come join The Florida Youth Council for an introduction to who we are! You will get to hear The Florida Youth Council themselves speak on the many accomplishments throughout their history. We hope to meet all of you there!

Shevie Barnes Florida Youth Council shevie@floridayouthcouncil.org

#### **Consumer Directed Care Plus (CDC+) Program Overview**

Florida A Saturday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

If you are considering enrolling in the Consumer Directed Care Plus (CDC+) Program, this is the session for you. This presentation will provide an introduction to and overview of the CDC+ Program and the requirements. Bring any questions you have about CDC+.

Susan Nipper Agency for Persons with Disabilities susan.nipper@apdcares.org Christine Pawelczyk
Agency for Persons with Disabilities
Christine.Pawelczyk@apdcares.org



#### **Creative Drama for All**

Manatee Spring I Saturday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

In this workshop, our teaching artists will present different ways to adapt drama for everyone. Through different theatre games, participants can express their feelings and emotions in a safe space, and learn how to use these feelings to portray various characters.

Sara Breitfelder Central Florida Community Arts (407) 937-1800 sara.breitfelder@cfcarts.com



#### Discovering My Son's Voice: A Father's Journey Through Gestalt Language Processing

Celebration 7 Saturday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Join me as I share the profound journey of uncovering my nonverbal son's voice through Gestalt Language Processing and scripting. This presentation will explore how embracing Gestalt Language Processing not only transformed his ability to express himself but also had a lasting impact on his education, independence, and overall quality of life. From breakthrough moments to practical insights, this session offers a unique perspective on embracing alternative communication methods to empower children with autism and foster meaningful connections. As a father actively involved in my son's education and therapies, I've faced the peculiar challenges of breaking gender stereotypes in advocacy while navigating the complexities

of Autism. I have spent years traversing the challenges of understanding and supporting his communication needs. Through hands-on experience, independent learning, and collaboration with speech-language professionals, I have become deeply familiar with Gestalt Language Processing and its applications. My personal journey has provided me with a unique and heartfelt perspective on the transformative power of these methods, and I am passionate about sharing this knowledge with other families and professionals.

Sergio Cruz sergiocruzucf@yahoo.com



#### **Exceptional Family Member Program Family Support (EFMP-FS) Did You Know**

Bayhill 20 Saturday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

This session will provide an overview of the comprehensive and coordinated community supports for military-connected families who have members with special needs. EFMP-FS takes an all-inclusive approach to coordinate military and civilian community, educational, medical, housing, and personnel services to help Service Members and their families with special needs.

Ta'Nashea McLeod MacDill AFB Angela Ocampo MacDill AFB Shalanda Wideman MacDill AFB



#### **Exploration with Prescribed Portable Optical Devices**

Assistive Technology Celebration 9 Saturday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Ahoy! Are you ready for a pirate adventure with low vision tools? In this hands-on activity, families and students with low vision will decorate their own pirate telescopes and practice with real telescopes to spot hidden clues throughout the room. There will also be a pirate treasure map for our young shipmates to explore by using one of the portable optical devices that are often prescribed by a low vision specialist for use at school, home, and in the community. This session will introduce families and students to the Florida Low Vision Initiative, an IDEA-funded state project, while focusing on a few of the important prerequisite skills, such as spotting and scanning, that are needed to use portable low vision devices.

Allison Bryan Florida Low Vision Initiative Samantha Kelly Florida Low Vision Initiative



# Financial Planning Strategies for Families with Special Needs Celebration 3-4 Saturday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

We present a range of financial planning strategies for parents of children with special needs. These include: Understanding and organizing your expenses and medical information; The importance of a Letter of Intent; Preparing for your child to reach age of consent (adulthood); Special Needs Trusts and who they benefit; Medicaid and SSI; and ABLE Accounts. Overall we present a clear and concise story to help alleviate parents' stress about the future of their child. This includes practical tips for maximizing benefits both for the present and, critically, for when the child reaches adulthood. We include some technical aspects of the legislation but in a simple and practical way. Written materials are in English. presenters will be bilingual (Spanish).

Stephen Clark Prudentia(305) 420-2625 stephen.clark@prudential.com Nelson Maldonado



# From Diagnosis to Family Leadership - A Panel Discussion with the Early Steps Family Resource Specialists

Bayhill 31-32 Saturday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

The journey of a parent who has a child with special needs is full of unexpected surprises, challenges, and triumphs. Although each person's story is unique, there are also underlying themes that are common to many families. During this session, we will hear directly from family leaders about their journey and navigating the world of disabilities. Our panel, consisting of Early Steps Family Resource Specialists, will share stories and tips that they've learned along the way from their experiences in the early years and advocating throughout their child's development, as well as their experiences in a professional capacity. The Family Resource Specialists will also share what started their journey in leadership, and what keeps them motivated to continue to help families.

Marisol Rose Florida Department of Health, Children's Medical Services, Early Steps Program (850) 938-9198

Mrose@manasotabuds.org

Doris Tellado North Central Early Steps dtellado@peds.ufl.edu Melanie Provenza Northeastern Early Steps melanie.provenza@jax.ufl.edu

Rose Lumm Central Florida Early Steps rose.lumm@orlandohealth.com Natalie Eno Treasure Coast Early Steps neno@fl.easterseals.com

Beverly Montgomery Southernmost Coast Early Steps Bmontgomery@fl.easterseals.com

Nelsy Crowell Gulf Central Early Steps nelsycrowell@hpcswf.com

#### **Inclusive Housing**

Bayhill 18 Saturday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

This presentation will explore the critical need for innovative supported housing communities that prioritize inclusivity, affordability, and accessibility for adults with disabilities. We will discuss how these communities can serve as transformative spaces where individuals thrive, fostering a sense of belonging and reducing the risk of homelessness. The presentation

will delve into the positive impact of such communities on the mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being of residents, highlighting the importance of creating supportive environments that empower individuals to live fulfilling and independent lives.

Tonya Whitlock
The Hive Inclusive Community
(808) 256-0916
tonya@theinclusivehive.org



#### Keeping Cool When Your Emotions Get Hot: Emotional Regulation for Neurodivergent Minds

Bayhill 26

Saturday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

We all lose our cool sometimes! Even with a trained professional in the home, it's tough to manage our responses to triggers. This session will discuss some of the unique challenges with emotional regulation, especially for those with neurodivergent brains. We will identify solutions for preventing and managing triggers, dysfunctional responses, outbursts, meltdowns, and other consequences of dysregulation, and share our own successes - and failures - at learning to regulate our emotions and behaviors with practical solutions, personal stories, and interactive participation with the audience.

Christina Gonzalez Daniel Gonzalez



#### Lab: Make a Tactile Calendar for Children with Visual or Dual Sensory Impairment

Celebration 12-13 Saturday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Participants will learn how to develop and make tactile symbols, cards, and/or calendar items for their child. Staff will assist to ensure the materials are relevant to the student and contain all appropriate learning media components, including braille. Items created may be used for various early communication or calendar systems such as First/Then Boards, Task Calendars, and Activity Choice Systems.

Tiffany Conrad Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually Impaired Cheri Hart Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually Impaired Sue Glaser Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually Impaired Andrea Wallace Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually Impaired



#### Michelle 'n Me

Bayhill 21 Saturday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

I grew up in the same Chicago borough as Michelle. Given her IDD and lack of family support, she was often isolated. However, she loved attending church with my mom because she had friends there who took an interest in her. When her uncle died, it was clear that Michelle could never live independently without support, so my husband and I became her guardian advocates. We'd like to share the good/bad/ugly lessons learned through our experiences of moving Michelle from Illinois to Florida and successfully getting her the needed services and support to live her best life.

Cindy Walker Ringel Research Analytics Consulting LLC (414) 218-2442 cindy@researchanalyticsconsulting.com Michelle Stine

Sue Gottsman

#### **Organizational Binder Workshop for Parents**

Bavhill 25 Saturday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Parents will create an organizational binder of educationally relevant documentation and activities that will assist in maintaining records and promoting positive communication, allowing teams to work collaboratively. The binder will be utilized so that parents can be prepared, actively listen, and become an informed voice during IEP meetings. Parents will possess the "tools of the trade," allowing them to actively engage in the planning of their child's educational career and be equal members of the IEP Team.

Jovce Dean Rebecca Cox

Florida Diagnostic & Learning Resources System Florida Diagnostic & Learning Resources System



#### Promover el desarrollo socioemocional a través del juego dirigido por los niños

Celebration 10 Saturday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

El juego dirigido por los niños va más allá de ser una actividad para los niños; es una oportunidad para una conexión emocional profunda, el respeto mutuo y el crecimiento personal. Al dar un paso atrás y permitir que el niño tome la iniciativa, los adultos fomentan un entorno rico y de apoyo en el que el niño se siente empoderado, comprendido y valorado. Es a través de este tipo de juego que las habilidades socioemocionales, como la autorregulación, la empatía y la conciencia social, pueden desarrollarse de manera orgánica, significativa y profundamente conectada con el mundo interior del niño.

Yadira Pagan-Rivera Easterseals Florida

Amanda Lopez Easterseals Florida

#### RBTs in Florida Schools: Understanding and Advocating for the Intent of the Law

Bayhill 28 Saturday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

There is a great deal of confusion from district to district and school to school on the Florida law that gives parents the right to send in private instructional personnel to their child's school. Attend this session to learn about the intent of the law, your rights as a parent of a child with a disability, and how RBTs can offer a great deal of support to schools struggling to hire desperately needed support staff.

Stacey Hoaglund Florida Developmental Disabilities Council (954) 261-3703 shoaglundpartner@gmail.com



#### Ready and Safe: Family Strategies for All Kinds of Emergencies

Bavhill 19 Saturday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

For families with loved ones who have disabilities or special health care needs, preparedness requires additional

thought and effort. It's important to be ready during emergencies and wherever life takes us, whether at home, school, work, or on vacation. Join this interactive session for information and practical strategies to handle different types of emergency situations. Together, we'll explore ways to help your family plan effectively, stay prepared, and ensure safety throughout the year.

Linda Starnes
Florida Department of Health, Children's Medical Services,
Title V Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs Program
(407) 858-5550
Linda.Starnes@flhealth.gov

#### **Redefining Community: Creating Opportunities in Rural Areas**

Celebration 16 Saturday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

As a family, we're redefining our rural Northwest Florida community to meet my son's unique needs. This presentation shares our journey of creating opportunities where none existed, despite much needed specialists being 250 miles away and resources being scarce. By leveraging available resources, we're building a community centered around abilities and needs, fostering inclusivity, and challenging geographical, economic, political, and social norms that would otherwise limit us. Our journey is chronicled on a blog and resources page, helping other families like ours navigate similar challenges and find ways to make a way where it seems like there isn't one.

Nikki Reddick

#### **Special Education PTAs in Diverse and Inclusive Schools**

Celebration 8 Saturday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

PTA is the largest volunteer child advocacy organization in the nation. We advocate for the health, safety, and education of children. Our members are able to form partnerships and coalitions to work towards our mission. This presentation will share information and resources that will allow participants to make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for children. In 1897, the PTA was formed by a group of parents to address the education, health and safety of children. Today it has over 6 million members. Florida PTA has over 200,000 members.

Lawrence Clermont
Florida Parent Teacher Association
vp.education@floridapta.org

Toni Nielson Florida Parent Teacher Association secretary@floridapta.org



#### **Strategies to Engage Families in Out-of-School Time Activities**

Bavhill 17 Saturday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Participation in out-of-school time (OST) activities and programs has been shown to promote life skill development (Junge et al., 2003). Enrollment and participation in community-based activities are dependent on caregivers. Parents/guardians are the caretakers of their children and are responsible for the enrollment, engagement, and participation of their children in out-of-school time activities. This presentation will share the results of research done with diverse caregivers of a child with a disability whose families participated in out-of-school time activities. This presentation will share recommended best practices and strategies to understand the needs of families and best practices to promote participation in OST activities.

Vanessa Spero UF/IFAS Extension, Florida 4-H (321) 615-7323 vspero@ufl.edu



The Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) helps students with disabilities transition from high school to a successful and meaningful career. VR strives to assist students with developing the skills necessary to successfully step into life after high school by becoming engaged in their community and recognizing the connection between academic pursuits and their future career successes. By offering opportunities for career exploration, development of interpersonal 'soft' skills, and counseling on post-secondary enrollment options, VR ensures students are prepared to achieve their career goals. With the Workforce and Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) enhancing the delivery and scope of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services to students with disabilities, VR has committed additional human and financial resources to assist students with disabilities and expanded its transition youth programs and services. These services are evidence-based and specifically designed to increase student self-awareness and assist in developing social and employability skills. VR teams with individual students with disabilities and their families to provide needed support and access to resources so that each student can create and implement a plan to reach their individual goals and, ultimately, enter a meaningful career. During this presentation, we will discuss how VR's Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) help students learn about their individual strengths, interests, and abilities, identify training options, develop general employability skills, and create goals. VR strives to assist students to develop the skills necessary to successfully step into life after high school by becoming engaged in their community and recognizing the connection between academic pursuits and their future career successes.

Brandi Boyer Rutherford Florida Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Jesse Riddle Florida Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

#### The Animation Connection: Utilizing Anime and Disney Films To Share Disability Awareness

Bayhill 22 Saturday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Many people with disabilities enjoy Japanese anime and Disney films, and are members of various Disney and anime fan communities. Listen to a group of disabled fans of anime and Disney films discuss how Japanese anime and Disney films can be utilized to share awareness about varying disabilities, describe how anime conventions and related events have successfully implemented various policies to make their conventions and events more inclusive and accessible to people with disabilities, and share how people with disabilities have built lasting and meaningful friendships within various Disney and anime fan communities.

James Williams
Wisconsin's Community of Practice on Autism Spectrum
Disorders and Developmental Disabilities
(224) 628-6629
jmw820@comcast.net

Hailey Buxton (727) 515-8233 kbuxton@tampabay.rr.com

Danica Lane lorettalane@me.com

#### Unlocking the Matrix: Maximizing IEP Funding and Support for Your Child in Florida

Bayhill 29-30 Saturday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

This session will empower Florida parents to navigate the Matrix of Services system, a critical tool determining funding for their child's IEP (Individualized Education Plan) which could increase the money/funding they receive from the Step Up Scholarship. Through a breakdown of the five domains, parents will gain clarity on this complex process, understand how funding levels are calculated, and learn how to review their child's matrix. With actionable advocacy tips, parents will be equipped to work with IEP teams to ensure accurate funding recognition. By mastering this process, families can secure the necessary resources to support their child's education effectively. This course is a game-changer for maximizing opportunities through informed advocacy.

Jamie Kirschner Education Advocates of America (239) 340-0929 jamie@eduamerica.org





# What Is a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE): SCOTUS interpretations of FAPE from Rowley through Endrew F.

Celebration 2 Saturday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

In order to understand whether FAPE has been provided to a student with a disability, one first has to understand what the legal definition of FAPE is, how it is interpreted by the courts depending upon whether the student is on grade level standards or not, and what the measure of educational benefit that the District must confer on the student with a disability is. This presentation will provide the participants with this information so they can better advocate for their student with a disability.

Wendy West
Disability Rights Florida
(850) 488-9071
wendyw@disabilityrightsflorida.org



#### **YOU Can Start a Business**

Celebration 6 Saturday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Dog Treat Chef Allison, CEO of her company Doggy Delights by Allison, and her sidekicks will share their family's path to entrepreneurship. Heather Barnes, Executive Director of the Down Syndrome Association of Central Florida, will give a synopsis of the Entrepreneur Academy, a program available through the DSACF.

Allison Fogarty
Doggy Delights by Allison LLC

John Fogarty
Doggy Delights by Allison LLC

6:00 pm to 6:30 pm 7:00 pm to 10:00 pm Performance by Trey Keesling, Regency Rotunda

Saturday Night Dance, Plaza International Ballroom



**SATURDAY NIGHT** 

# dance party 7-10PM

PLAZA INTERNATIONAL BALLROOM

AMPLIFY

The 27th Annual Family CAFE

# ENTERTAINMENT **EVERYONE CAN ZUMBA!** Saturday 8:00 am to 8:45 am Regency Rotunda Sunday 8:00 am to 9:00 am Regency Rotunda

**JOY STREET** 

Friday 6:30 pm to 7:00 pm

Join us for an "all ages and all abilities" morning dance party. Wheelchairs and seated participants are welcome too! No wrong moves just unexpected solos." Bring a towel and water bottle, and get ready to have some fun!



#### **MILOSZ GASIOR**

Friday 6:00 pm to 6:30 pm

Meet Milosz Gasior, a pianist with autism who communicates through his music. Milosz's exceptional performances, including playing during a TEDx talk about his life's story that earned a standing ovation, inspire us all.

#### Regency Rotunda





#### ST. JOHN & FRIENDS

intentional design for humanity.

Friday 6:30 pm to 7:00 pm

St. John and Friends is a musical group passionate about live music and the power of performance. We believe music can inspire and enlighten. St. John, player of cello and piano, is a young man with intellectual differences who shares his voice through music. In March 2024, St. John, and St. John and Friends were recognized by NPR's From the Top's "Musicians with Disabilities Initiative" featured on their Daily

Plaza International Ballroom

Regency Bridge

Joy Street is a fully inclusive community choir making beautiful music, building lasting relationships, and spreading joy at community events and faith gatherings. At Joy Street, we celebrate one another, and we celebrate you! Joy Street is a part of Kairos Adventures, a multisite arts and adventures program for adults living with disabilities. Headquartered in Sanford, Florida, Kairos Adventures currently offers classes in Altamonte Springs, Orlando, Sanford and online. Kairos is on mission to empower people with varying abilities to discover and develop their unique God-given potential and purpose. It is a place where all people are seen, known, and celebrated as part of God's



Joy program. Along with our two other group members (Christina Erhayel and David Steadman), we perform jazz, contemporary and classical pieces. It is an honor to be performing for the attendees of the 27th Annual Family Cafe.

#### RADIANT VOICES

Saturday 1:00 pm to 1:30 pm

Plaza Pre-Function

Radiant Voices is a choir of singers with mild to significant disabilities. We are from Martin/St. Lucie County. Our goal is to support people with disabilities in sharing their beautiful abilities with everyone! The singers look forward to practicing each week as a time to learn new songs, socialize, and share their achievements every week.



The 27th Annual Family CAFÉ 106

# ENTERTAINMENT







Friday 11:00 am to 11:30 am Friday 3:00 pm to 3:30 pm Friday 4:30 pm to 5:00 pm Saturday 12:30 pm to 1:00 pm Saturday 4:30 pm to 5:00 pm

Regency Rotunda Regency Rotunda Regency Rotunda Regency Rotunda Regency Rotunda

TOGETHER AS A **TEAM!** 

Pyramid is IN THE HOUSE and ready to celebrate the 27th Annual Family Café with you! You won t want to miss a single set by these talented performers and musicians! The Players and Electric People study their craft at Pyramid, Inc., an arts-focused nonprofit adult day training program providing opportunities for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to enhance their abilities, discover their talents and transform their lives.

#### TREY KEESLING

Saturday 6:00 pm to 6:30 pm Regency Rotunda

Trey Keesling is a percussionist on the spectrum from Alachua County. He has played jazz vibraphone as a soloist in multiple settings, including Autism in the Arts sponsored by CARD-UF. Currently, he is a member of the Annasemble Community Orchestra of Gainesville.



#### **SOFISTYKAT STRINGS**

Friday 1:00 pm to 1:30 pm Plaza Pre-Function

Bring the magic of live music to your event with SofistyKat

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*



Strings! With a blend of classical and contemporary styles, performances by Katerina Rancano and Sofia Causa are crafted to add a touch of elegance and sophistication to every occasion. Let us bring the magic of music to your special moments for an inclusive and memorable experience!

### **UPBEAT!**

Saturday 9:30 am to 10:00 am Saturday 11:00 am to 11:30 am

Regency Rotunda Regency Rotunda

Central Florida Community Arts UpBeat! Program provides an artistic platform for youth, teen, and adult exceptional learners and neurodivergent performers. CFCArts is proud to holistically support our performers and showcase their incredible talent and potential for the entire community. UpBeat! performers are given opportunities appropriate to their individual needs that

encourage and challenge them in ways not typically available in a mainstream community theatre program.



#### **BRAZILIAN VOICES**

Friday 4:30 pm to 5:00 pm Saturday 10:00 am to 10:30 am

Regency Bridge Regency Bridge

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Brazilian Voices, an acclaimed non-profit female vocal group, proudly marks 25 years of musical excellence. With a rich international

performance history, the group has been a source of inspiration in South Florida, gracing theaters, universities, schools, and bringing the soothing sounds of Bossa Nova to hospitals, Cancer Centers, schools for children with disabilities, and elderly assisted living facilities. In



2025, Brazilian Voices is delighted to showcase their talent at both the Women's Summit and The Annual Family Café. Explore their musical journey on all major digital platforms, where their harmonious melodies continue to resonate with audiences.



10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Keynote Address Plaza International Ballroom

## **Become A Mental Wellness Superhero**

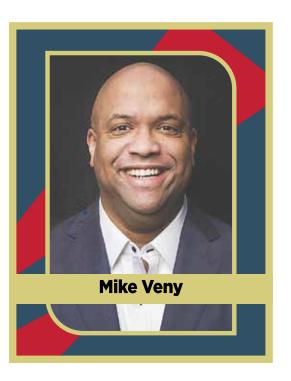
Mike Veny is fiercely committed to empowering people to discover the gift of emotional wellness and resilience, enabling them to accelerate personal and professional growth while combating burnout.

Determined to overcome a lifetime of severe mental health challenges, Mike's career began as a professional drummer and evolved into becoming a change maker in the workplace wellness industry. In addition to being a world-class keynote speaker, he's a corporate drumming event facilitator for team building, podcast host, and the author of several books, including the best-selling book *Transforming Stigma: How to Become a Mental Wellness Superhero.* His expertise and life experience have been featured on ABC, NBC, and CBS News.

As a child, Mike was expelled from several schools, attempted suicide, and spent time in psychiatric hospitals for extended periods. His path to becoming a motivational speaker became evident early when he learned how to convince the staff to discharge him. In the fifth grade, Mike was placed in a special education class. In addition to getting more individualized attention from the teacher, he learned that pencil erasers make great sounds

when tapped on a desk. He had no idea that drumming would become his path to mental wellness.

TOGETHER AS A TEAM!



"Emotional wellness is the foundation of emotional intelligence, psychological safety and a core component of human-centric skills." - Mike Veny

Together as a TEAM!

As an adult, Mike spent many years facilitating drum workshops for children with disabilities. The project was such a hit that he continued to expand his drumming program, first to adults in recovery and eventually to team building in organizations. Mike delivers unique learning e to move past simply educating an audience to provide them with actionable steps they can t take to change their lives and work environments. He's delivered presentations to Fortune 500 companies, healthcare providers, and educators, including Microsoft, CVS Health, T-Mobile, Heineken, Salesforce, Keurig Dr. Pepper, and The Wounded Warrior Project.

# SUNDANI THE ANNUAL June 15, 2025 Santly Gazes

8:00 am to 9:00 am 8:00 am to 9:00 am

8:00 am to 10:30 am 8:30 am to 9:30 am 9:00 am to 10:00 am 10:00 am to 10:30 am 10:30 am to 12:00 pm 12:00 pm to 1:30 pm Everyone Can Zumba!, Regency Rotunda

Hope in the Hard Places: Anchored by His Promises with Rev. Robert E. "Bobby" Streater, III, MA, Manatee Spring II

Club Café, Orlando L

Friends of Bill, Columbia 35

Duck Race, Grotto Pool

Sun Wolf Dance Project, Plaza Pre-Function

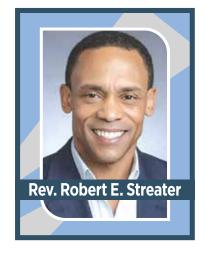
**Keynote Address by Mike Veny, Plaza International Ballroom** 

Closing and Door Prizes, Plaza International Ballroom

### **Hope in the Hard Places: Anchored by His Promises**

8:00 am to 9:00 am Manatee Spring II

Join us this Sunday morning for a powerful dose of encouragement designed to lift your spirit and renew your hope! Life s challenges can feel overwhelming, but God's promises are a steadfast anchor, holding us steady no matter the storm. Together, we'll dive into Hebrews 6:19 "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure" and uncover the incredible strength and peace that come from trusting in His unchanging character. Come ready to be inspired, encouraged, and reminded that with God, you are never alone in the hard places. Let's rediscover the joy and hope that only He can provide!



#### **Duck Race**

9:00 am to 10:00 am Grotto Pool

Even ducks can participate in active leisure!! These ducks are fierce competitors. One could win you a big prize, and all help out SportsAbility and The Family Café.



Imagine not one, not a dozen, but hundreds of them racing down the water slide towards a finish line where you (and hundreds of other humans like you) cheer on your adopted duck, hoping it will finish first and win you the Big Prize. Prizes include Gatorland passes, a giant floating duck, and more!

Here's how you can participate: During The Annual Family Café, purchase your little rubber ducks (just like the one in your bathtub) at the SportsAbility booth. SportsAbility will keep the ducks all together and you will be provided with your duck number. At 9:00 am on Sunday, the ducks will be placed at the starting line, and race down to the finish line. If your duck is one of the winners, you will be one of the lucky recipients of an amazing prize. Entries are limited, so don't miss your chance!

## TOGETHER AS A TEAM!

## ACCURATE SERVICE OF A SECOND O

## TOGETHER AS A TEAM!





## **ABLE United Enrollment Hub**

Silver Spring II



### Friday 9:00 am to 6:30 pm **Saturday 8:00 am to 7:00 pm**

Have questions about ABLE accounts? Join us at the ABLE United Enrollment Hub in Silver Spring II. Open during the same hours as the Exhibit Hall, the ABLE United Enrollment Hub is your go-to spot for one-on-one support in opening your new ABLE United account this weekend. Whether you re just getting started or have questions about managing your account, our team is here to help. Schedule a meeting with our team during office hours, join us during the informative presentations, or stop in to get answers to all your ABLE guestions, and learn how you can get \$50 for opening a new ABLE United account today!

## **Adapted Art Exploration**

Orlando N



#### Saturday 9:00 am to 3:30 pm

The arts provide a wonderful way for children with disabilities to express themselves.

This session will be free exploration time for you and your child to try out adapted tools and materials. A variety of different

materials and tools that are commercially available, as well as adaptations you can make at home, will be available. Our Arts4All Florida staff will be here to help you and answer questions. Short, drop-in music and dance activities will happen throughout the day.



### Club Café Orlando L



### Friday 10:00 am to 6:00 pm Saturday 8:00 am to 6:00 pm Sunday 8:00 am to 10:30 am

The Club Café at the Family Café Conference offers a safe, welcoming space for youth and young adults to relax, connect, and engage in healing-centered activities. Designed with input from the Florida Youth Council, the Club Café features drop-in stations representing the 8 Dimensions of Wellness, leadership activities, and fun, prosocial sessions. Participants can enjoy workshops on mindfulness,

movement, music, and more promoting holistic well-being and mental health. Stop by to chill out, make new friends, and explore wellness in a supportive environment!



## **Hands-on Tech Expo**

Florida B



Friday 11:30 am to 6:00 pm Saturday 8:30 am to 6:00 pm

The PS/Rtl Technology and Learning Connections Project is excited to offer an engaging, accessible, hands-on Tech Expo. Explore the power of play with various technologies involving kid-friendly activities and hands-on experiences that will make learning fun!



## **Florida Community Care Discovery Hub**

Blue Spring

Friday 9:00 to 6:00 pm Saturday 8:00 am to 6:00 pm



Visit the FCC Discovery Hub at The 27th Annual Family Café for games, giveaways, and to learn more about us.

#### The 27th Annual Family CAFÉ 110

## ACTIVITIES ROOM

## **TOGETHER** AS A TEAM!





Columbia 36

Friday 9:00 am to 7:30 pm Saturday 8:00 am to 6:30 pm

Bring the whole family to the 3rd floor, room Columbia 36! Public and private demonstrations available for this 2024 Physical Therapy Innovation of the Year, along with a guiet play area for siblings and family members, 9:00 am Friday

and 8:00 am Saturday. Stop by to sign up for private demo slots for your family or sign up through the conference app. Be sure to stop by Friday evening from 6:00-7:30 to wish the inventor, Jenna Lammers, a Happy 50th B-Day and pick up a \$50 off coupon for future orders.



**NSU College of Law Independent Living** Kitchen - Where We Cook Up Supported **Decision-Making Agreements and other Guardianship Alternatives** 

Rainbow Spring I

Friday 10:00 am to 4:00 pm Saturday 10:00 am to 4:00 pm Florida



In the NSU Law Indepdendent Living Kitchen, students from the Disability Inclusion and Advocacy Law (DIAL) Clinic at Nova Southeastern University and lawyer volunteers assist conference attendees with guardian advocacy matters. powers of attorney, supported decision making agreements and other guardianship alternatives by conducting intakes and interviews to understand legal needs, drafting and explaining legal documents, and providing personalized guidance and support. They help attendees navigate the complexities of guardianship, make informed decisions, and understand the legal requirements and processes involved. such as qualifications, background checks, and attorney representation.

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## **Henry's Friendly Farm Sensory Playroom**

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

Orlando M

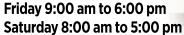
### Friday 9:30 am to 6:00 pm **Saturday 8:30 am to 5:00 pm**



Henry's Friendly Farm Sensory Playroom is a safe, sensoryrich space designed specifically for children with unique needs. Explore inflatable barnyard animals, ball pit tunnels, foam climbing blocks and more, all offering interactive fun and tactile play. The cozy reading nook invites families to relax with soft blankets, stuffed animals and sensory-friendly toys. This vibrant playroom encourages creativity, exploration and connection among the Family Café community.

### **Sunshine Health** Community **Connections Center**

Rainbow Spring II





The Community Connections Center initiative has proven to be an effective and valuable resource on many levels. Our Community Connections Centers serve as customer service locations, staffing offices, community resource centers as well as locations for member and prospect events to support all our product lines.

## **The Pawsome Spot**

Columbia 34

Friday 9:00 am to 6:30 pm Saturday 8:00 am to 6:30 pm Come to the third floor to visit our fur babies and get some "pawsitive therapy" or educational information regarding service and therapy animals. Join us for some "pawsome" moments at The Pawsome Spot!



**Introducing The Annual Family Cafe's** 

## **Hot Plate Panel Series**



Plaza International Ballroom Friday 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

A Recipe For Growing Up: Do You Have All The **Ingredients?** 

Join us for a focused conversation about issues that matter to people with disabilities and their families in The Family Café's new Hot Plate Panel Series!

This series gives you the chance to hear about an issue from every side, instead of from the single perspective of a provider, agency, or organization. This is a friendly place to learn and talk about the most important disability issues of the day.

This year's Hot Plate session, "A Recipe for Growing Up: Do You Have All the Ingredients?" takes on youth to adult transition.



## POWN SYNDROME SOUT LOUD

Plaza International Ballroom Saturday 10:00 am to 11:00 am

Moderated by Melissa Hart, author of *Down Syndrome Out Loud: 20+ Stories about Disability and Determination* (Sourcebooks, 2025), this fun and lively panel features five people profiled in the book. They'll share anecdotes about their creative work, their hobbies, and their activism, along with a wealth of advice on everything from how to promote your business on TikTok and how to break into the Hollywood film industry to how to take care of your physical and mental health while traveling around the country as a public speaker. Participants will receive a robust handout of resources.



**MELISSA HART** 



**ABIGAIL ADAMS** 

Ms. Adams is an inspiration to millions because she represents what is possible despite overwhelming odds. Abigail was born with Down syndrome, had a hole in her heart, and was diagnosed with "failure to thrive". Since then she has overcome these obstacles that many believed to be insurmountable. Abigail is a very successful influencer, model, keynote speaker and the first woman with Down syndrome to complete a sanctioned triathlon. Abigail has collaborated with a number of high profile companies, has a wonderful keynote speaker presence, over 1.4M followers on social media (Abigail the Advocate), and happens to have Down Syndrome.



**ALLISON FOGARTY** 

Allison Fogarty is a Dog Treat Chef and CEO of her company Doggy Delightes by Allison LLC. Her passion is cooking, and in 2017 when she started her business. she turned her energy to the dogs! Allison began by creating healthy and delicious dog treat recipes. Her Doggy Delights are currently shipped to eager customers all over the United States. Allison has appeared on the Rachael Ray Show and has been featured Women's World, STLE, and Clermont Neighbors Magazine. She was chosen as a member of the Orlando Business Journal's 40 under 40 Class of 2020 and is a member of the International Society of Female Professionals.



**ZACHARY GOTTSAGEN** 

Zachary "Zack" Gottsagen is an award-winning actor and star of the 2019 indie hit, "The Peanut Butter Falcon." Zack was the first child with Down syndrome to be fully included in the Palm Beach County school district and graduated as a theatre major from Dreyfoos School of the Arts. After the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed, Zack filed one of the first ADA suits, which successfully challenged Little League to include children with disabilities. Zack enjoys spending time with his friends, bowling, watching wrestling, loves listening to music, dancing, and spending time with his 3 rescue dogs.



**KAYLA MCKEON** 

Kavla works to advance legislation beneficial to the Down syndrome community. Kayla gained experience working with Members of Congress as an intern for Congressman John Katko of New York. She was named NDSS Self-Advocate of the Year in 2016 and joined the NDSS staff the following year. As the first registered lobbyist with Down syndrome, Kayla is a spokesperson for NDSS and the Down syndrome community, participating in media and speaking publicly both nationally and internationally. Kayla has an associate degree in general studies from Onondaga Community College and an honorary doctorate in Humane Letters.



**CHARLOTTE WOODWARD** 

Charlotte is the Programs Associate for the National Down Syndrome Society; there, she assists with resource development and policy initiatives. As the recipient of a life-saving heart transplant, she's the inspiration for the Charlotte Woodward Organ Transplant Discrimination Prevention Act. She graduated Summa Cum Laude from George Mason University with a bachelor's degree in sociology with a concentration in inequality and social change.



**INTRODUCING THE** 

## Foyer of the Plaza International Ballroom

FRIDAY, JUNE 13th

**SATURDAY, JUNE 14th** 

11:00 am to 11:30 am

9:30 am to 10:00 am

3:00 pm to 3:30 pm

3:00 pm to 3:30 pm

4:30 pm to 5:00 pm

4:00 pm to 4:30 pm

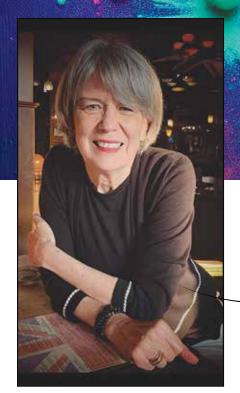
Enjoy a one-of-a-kind red-carpet experience!

A truly unique, lively, and memorable experience. . . .

- On the scene interviews
- Share your stories
- Engaging conversations
- Creating lasting impressions
- Paparazzi



Prepare yourself for a FUN time "Come this way, and step on the red carpet!"



## Paula Petry, PhD

10:00 am to 11:00 am Barrel Spring ii

Celebration of Color Col

Love never dies.

This session is for you if a loved one has died, and you would like to receive support in your grieving process. Together, we celebrate our loved one's gifts and find comfort in remembering them. We share, reflect, and support one another in our sorrow. We come together each year because we know that sharing and caring together is healing. It

allows us to pause and reflect as we honor the lives of those who profoundly touched our lives. For people with physical or mental disabilities, the loss of a loved one can be especially upsetting. The emotions can feel overwhelming, but within the safe and supportive environment of The Family Café, healing can continue. Your facilitator is Paula Petry, PhD - author, speaker, and grief expert. Paula will share her deeply personal and transformational journey through her deep sadness and grief from the unexpected loss of her daughter Alexandra. She has prepared a special presentation, small ceremony and handouts to help you experience your grief from a position of strength and gratitude. You will also receive a memento and a copy of Paula.s memoir, *A Mother's Courage to Awaken*, Mango Press 2020. My daughter was everything to me, and the thought of living without her felt unimaginable. Nothing I did brought me comfort or fulfillment. It was through an unexpected encounter with a wise man that I began to steadily walk my path to peace.

The Celebration of Life Ceremony was established in 2012 after the passing of Lizzy Barrows, a member of The Family Café's Florida Youth Council. Every year, we gather to celebrate her legacy and the impact she had on her community.

The Brazilian Voices will bring their melodic voices to soothe our souls.



# SPORTS ABILITY 1990-2025 SAMPLERS

## PRESENTED BY SPORTSABILITY ALLIANCE

in partnership with:



OBLANDO, FLORIDA



## **Activities and Providers:**

## FRIDAY, JUNE 13 at 4:30pm and SATURDAY, JUNE 14 at 11:00am

Gatorland Animal Show: Live Alligators & Crocodiles (gatorland.com)

### **SATURDAY, JUNE 14**

**9:30-10:30am:** New Technologies and the Opportunities Provided for Recreation for People of ALL Abilities in Celebration 13.

**2:30-5:00pm:** Snorkeling and SCUBA Demonstration with Life Worth Leading at Quiet Pool (Upper Pool Deck/Recreation Level) (lifeworthleading.org) *Space is limited and registration is* **required**. You **must** register in advance at Snorkeling and SCUBA booth in the SportsAbility Hall.

#### **ACTIVITIES IN SPORTSABILITY HALL:**

- Archery: FL Fish and Wildlife Commission (myfwc.com)
- Tennis: United States Tennis Association (usta.com)
- Track Chairs: EcoRover Chairs (ecoroverchairs.com)
- Axe Throwing: (removingthebarriers.org)

#### **PARTNERS IN SPORTSABILITY HALL:**

- Access Rec (accessrec.com)
- Ann's Angels (annsangelsawf.org)
- Inspired Acres (inspiredacresfl.org)
- FL State Parks Foundation (floridastateparksfoundation.org)
- Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida (wildlifeflorida.org)
- Living Lucky (startlivinglucky.com)

www.sportsability.org



## SUNDAY, JUNE 15 at 9 AM- Rubber Duck Race

SportsAbility Alliance will be hosting our Annual Rubber Duck Race on Sunday, June 15. Rubber ducks can be purchased from the SportsAbility booth during Family Cafe. Sunday morning the ducks will be placed at the pool starting line and race to the finish! If your ducks win, you can pick from amazing prizes, but you must be present to win!



**FOR YOUTH AGED 15-30 YEARS ONLY** 

FRIDAY 10 AM - 6 PM

SATURDAY 8 AM - 6 PM

8 PM - 10 PM

**SUNDAY** 8 AM - 10:30 AM

## **ROOM ORLANDO L**

The Club Café is a place for youth ages 15-30 to come "chill" and get resources on all 8 dimensions of wellness to help increase their well-being including activities and fun games.

## **8 DIMENSIONS OF WELLNESS:**

- Spiritual
- Physical
- Occupational
- · Intellectual
- Finances
- Environment
- Emotional health
- Social life

## Come check it out!





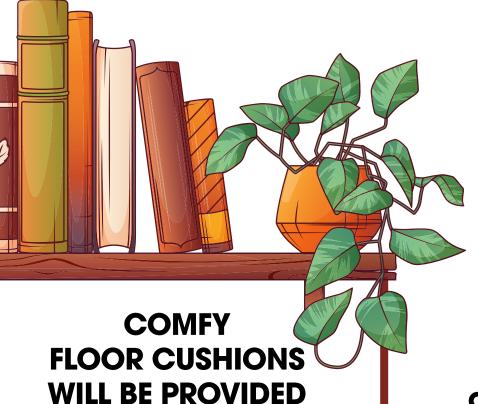




# JOIN THE FAMILY CAFÉ'S VERY OWN AUTHORS

...in Regency Ballroom Q as they read aloud from their books.





## BOOK FAIR

Book Readings will take place from

9:30 am - 5:30 pm on Friday, June 13 and from

9:00 am - 4:45 pm on Saturday, June 14







## A CONFERENCE FOR YOUTH & EMERGING LEADERS WITH DISABILITIES AT THE FLORIDA HOTEL & CONFERENCE CENTER IN ORLANDO

As Summer Comes To An End, Join The Florida Youth Council

For One Big Last Hurrah At The 18th Annual Youth Summit On August 8-9 In Orlando! **The Annual Youth Summit** is a place for young people with disabilities between the ages of 15 and 30 from communities across the state of Florida to come together to learn, share, and network. This two-day event is hosted by **The Florida Youth Council** (FYC), a group of youth and emerging leaders with disabilities who have a passion for encouraging leadership and advocacy among their peers. The FYC is all about youth empowerment and youth involvement, and the entire **Annual Youth Summit** is planned by youth, for youth!

**The 18th Annual Youth Summit** will bring together over 200 youth and emerging leaders to attend engaging youth-only sessions on a wide variety of topics, including transition, workplace preparedness, and post-secondary schooling. We will have a great, youth-friendly keynote and fun activities at The Summit, including a dance party to cap off the festivities. There were plenty of opportunities for attendees to network, and share their thoughts, experiences, and aspirations.

**The 18th Annual Youth Summit** will be held at The Florida Hotel and Conference Center in Orlando **August 8-9, 2025**. Limited financial assistance is available. Attendees not requesting financial assistance should contact the reservation line at **800-588-4656** to make reservations and identify themselves as attendees of The Family Café for a special room rate of \$117 per night.

## WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU IN ORLANDO IN AUGUST!



**FREE ONLINE REGISTRATION!** 

familycafe.net/register-for-the-annual-youth-summit/





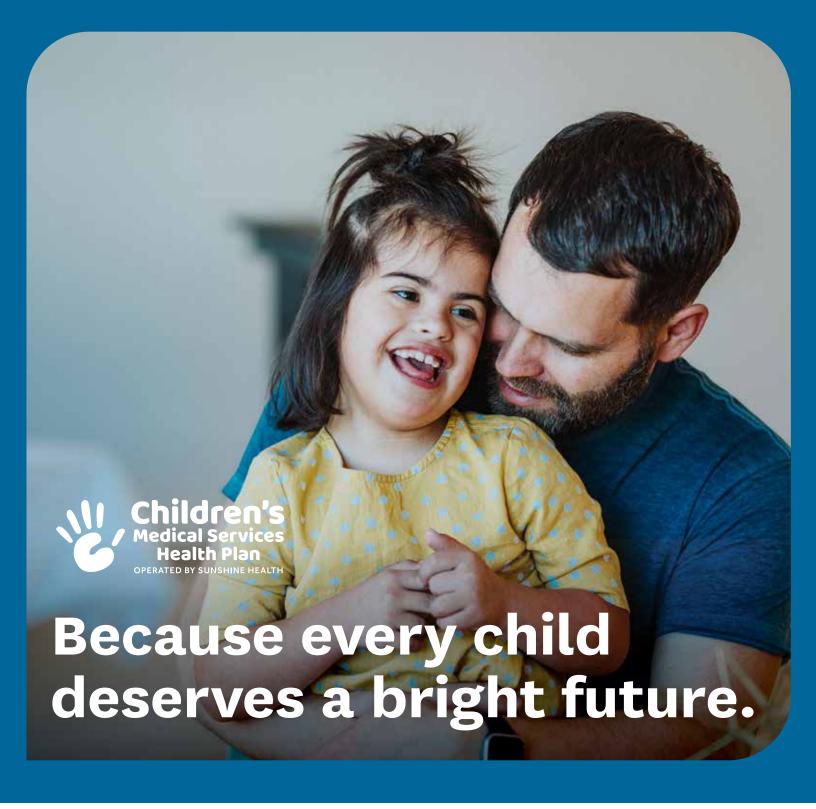
## Proud partner of the Family Café.

We're dedicated to improving the health of the communities we serve, one person at a time. With our Medicaid plans, we're eliminating barriers to access and helping members care for their whole health.









## Proud partner of the Family Café.

Sunshine Health is dedicated to improving the health of the communities we serve, one person at a time. Children's Medical Services Health Plan, operated by Sunshine Health on behalf of the Florida Department of Health, provides services to children who have special healthcare needs.













The Able Trust is proud to sponsor the Family Café Expo and support their commitment to providing resources and opportunities to persons with disabilities and their families.

The Able Trust was established to support the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. For 30 years, The Able Trust High School High Tech program has been supporting students with disabilities. Through partnerships in communities around Florida, our youth programs ensure students graduate from high school and move onto postsecondary opportunities.

High School High Tech prepares students for the next step after they cross the stage during graduation, and shows them a path forward

#### Want to learn more?



Join our newsletter list by scanning the QR code.











## Achieving great things for our community

When a group of people comes along who have the courage and vision to turn dreams into reality, they make the future bright for everyone.

We proudly celebrate the achievements of The Family Café.



The Florida Division of Blind Services (DBS) is committed to empowering individuals of all ages who are blind or visually impaired to live independent and fulfilling lives. From career development to daily living, we partner with our clients every step of the way. Whether you're a parent seeking resources for your child, a student planning for the future or an adult adjusting to vision loss, DBS works to ensure that blind and visually impaired Floridians have the tools, support and opportunity to achieve success.

## **OUR SERVICES**

- Pre-Employment Transition Services
- School-to-Work Program
- Transition Services
- Employment Services
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- · Residential Training Center
- Business Enterprise Program
- · Independent Living Services
- · Older Blind Services
- Blind Babies Program
- Children's Program
- Braille and Talking Book Library

## **CONTACT US**



**Phone Number** 

Phone: 850-245-0300 Toll Free: 800-342-1828



Website dbs.fldoe.org





## Free and confidential services including:

Information and referral

Advocacy, legal representation and negotiations

Investigation and facility monitoring

#### For more information:

800-342-0823 **•**\* TDD 800-346-4127

www.DisabilityRightsFlorida.org



Advocacy. Equality. Dignity.



Located in Orlando, FL

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- APD WAIVER SERVICES
  - Residential Nursing
  - Residential
  - Habilitation
  - Personal Supports/Respite
  - Private Duty Nursing
  - Skilled Nursing

Our luxurious homes offer comfort, safety, and personalized attention from a skilled medical team, ensuring every resident thrives with dignity and respect.



## Not Your Average Parenting Magazine— This One Gets It

Raising a child with a disability?

Parenting Special Needs Magazine provides FREE digital access to expert advice, real-life stories, and practical tools designed specifically for you.

Join our community of over 250,000 families and professionals who are making a difference every day.



Subscribe FREE Today! ParentingSpecialNeeds.org Scan to join us!







Take part in The Family Café's newest program, the Family-Run Organization Movement (FROM)!

The Mission of FROM is to engage, support, empower and advocate for family, youth and peer-run organizations.

FROM will provide a wide range of supports and services, including leadership training, governance enhancement, program support, monthly collaborative forums, a program newsletter, and other resources to help organizations attain new levels of participation in the system of care.

Local family-run organizations are a critical part of the service delivery system, bringing families and youth together, connecting them with information, resources, and each other. FROM is here to help them thrive!

To join and get more information please see the FROM link at www.familycafe.net or call 850-224-4670





## GET CONNECTED WITH OUR APP





Plan your schedule



**Network** with other attendees



**Engage** with exhibitors and sponsors



**Download** presentation materials



**Earn** points for participating





Android

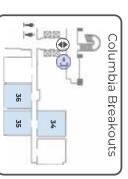
Download the **App Now** 



iOS

Download the **App Now** 

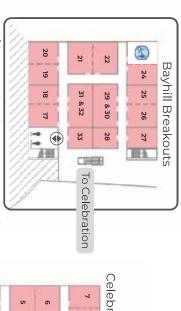


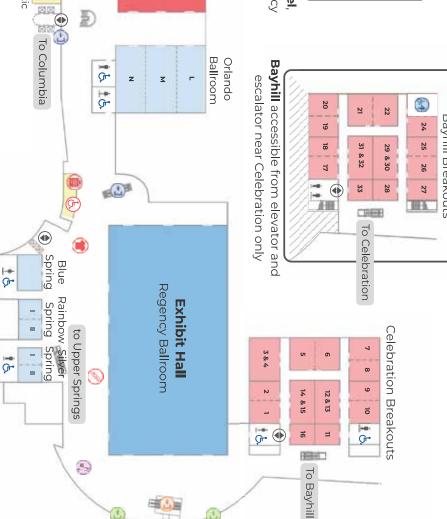


accessible from Hyatt Regency Columbia, on the Third Level, Tower 1 elevators only

Services

Ballroom Florida





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**Amenities** 

🔊 Wheelchair Rental

Registration Desk

🐑 Family Cafe Merchandise Coloring Station ASL Interpreters

**General Sessions** Plaza Int. Ballroom

- Elevator
- Men's Restroom

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3

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(3) Gulf

Atlantic

- & Wheelchair Accessible Women's Restroom
- Adult Changing Table
- Dog Walk Area
- Exit to Hyatt Regency
- Exit to Skywalk
- Exit to Street

# **Events & Programming**

- ABLE United Enrollment Hub Adapted Art Exploration (Sat)
- Book Fair
- Club Café
- Concurrent Sessions
- The Pawsome Spot
- Exhibit Hall
- FIMC-VI Interactive Learning
- Florida Community Care Discovery Hub
- Gatorland Animal Show

- Orlando N Silver Spring II
- Regency Ballroom
- Orlando L
- Columbia 34
- Celebration 12 & 13 Regency Ballroom
- Blue Spring

Regency Ballroom

- Hands-on Tech Expo General Sessions

Florida B

- NSU Independent Living
- GiggleFIT Play Gym

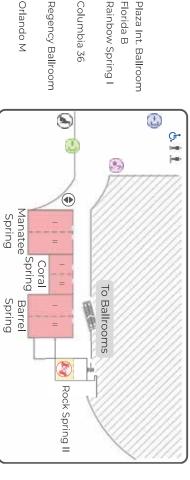
Columbia 36

- Red Carpet Experience SportsAbility Sampler
- Self-Advocate Entertainment
- Henry's Friendly Farm Sensory Playroom

Sunshine Health Community

Connection Center

- Regency Ballroom
- Orlando M
- Rainbow Spring II



**Upper Springs** accessible from elevators and escalator near Regency Ballroom or from Hyatt Regency Lobby



## Supporting Florida's IDD Community, Together.





## See you next year!



AT THE 28TH ANNUAL FAMILY, CARLY, CAR

HYATT REGENCY ORLANDO 9801 INTERNATIONAL DRIVE, ORLANDO, FL





FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM @THEFAMILYCAFEFL



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