



“THE GREAT TWENTY-EIGHT!”

THE 28TH ANNUAL

FAMILY CAFE

FEATURING THE ANNUAL SUMMIT ON DISABILITIES

ONE WEEKEND ONLY!

HYATT REGENCY ORLANDO
9801 International Dr, Orlando, FL

JUNE
12-14, 2026



Dear Family Café Attendees,

On behalf of The Family Café Board of Directors, welcome to The 28th 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, and building community across all kinds of disability experiences, 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 28th 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 28th 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 you need 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

**"THE GREAT
TWENTY-EIGHT!"**





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 28th 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 2026. 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. This year's agenda includes more than 200 sessions scheduled across seven time slots. 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 NPR reporter and investigative journalists Joseph Shapiro. On Saturday, join us for a screening of *Patrice: The Movie* and a conversation with the filmmakers and cast of this award-winning disability documentary. Sunday will feature Kevin Spencer, Ph.D., award-winning performing artist, author, and educator, and leading authority on the educational and therapeutic uses of magic.

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 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. And definitely make time to check out our newest addition, our Disability History Timeline and Media Room!

We've done our best to bring together the information and resources you need in a space that celebrates the disability experience and families like yours. We hope The 28th 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





Robert Asztalos


agency for persons with disabilities
State of Florida

Dear Family Café Attendees,


Welcome to the 28th Annual Family Café — the nation's largest statewide cross-disabilities conference. This event continues to bring together individuals with disabilities, families, advocates, providers, and community partners from across Florida for meaningful learning, connection, and collaboration.

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) is proud to participate in this longstanding gathering that provides the disability community with valuable information, resources, and networking opportunities. Through home and community-based services, APD provides Floridians with developmental disabilities with services to live their lives to the fullest measure, as independently as possible in their communities.

Conferences like the Family Café reflect the strength of Florida's disability community — bringing people together to share knowledge, build partnerships, and promote opportunities in education, health, employment, housing, and advocacy. All of this is to better the lives of Floridians with developmental disabilities. I plan to walk the halls of the event, so please stop me and let me know how APD is doing serving our clients.

Thank you for your continued commitment to supporting individuals with disabilities across our state. We look forward to engaging with you throughout the conference.

Sincerely,


Robert Asztalos
Director

TICKET | JUNE 12-14

RON DESANTIS
GOVERNOR
SHEVAUN L. HARRIS
SECRETARY



June 2026

Dear Family Café participants,

On behalf of the Agency for Health Care Administration, welcome to this year's Family Café. This gathering is a treasured tradition, one that celebrates the strength, resilience, and leadership of individuals with developmental disabilities and the families who stand beside them.

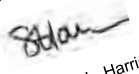
The Agency's commitment is simple and unwavering: to enhance access to care, reduce barriers, and ensure that services are easy to find, easy to navigate, and responsive to what matters most to you. We are focused on strengthening the pathways to care across Florida so that wherever you live, you can connect to providers who understand your goals and deliver the right supports at the right time.

We also believe that care should be community-based. The services we advance are designed to meet people where they are and help them thrive at home, at school, at work, and in the neighborhoods they love. When we align services around the whole person and family, we improve health, independence, and quality of life.

Your advocacy continues to shape the future of care in Florida. By sharing your experiences, ideas, and priorities, you help us identify what's working and where we can do better. Thank you for speaking up, showing up, and lifting each other up. Your voice guides our work, and your partnership makes our progress possible.

Thank you to The Family Café for creating a welcoming space to learn, connect, and build community. We are honored to support this event and to join you in championing access, inclusion, and opportunity for all Floridians.

With appreciation,



Shevaun L. Harris
Secretary



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Shevaun Harris

THE **FAMILY**
CAFÉ



James S. Hartsell
Executive Director

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Ron DeSantis
Governor
James Uthmeier
Attorney General
Blaise Ingoglia
Chief Financial Officer
Wilton Simpson
Commissioner of Agriculture

April 1, 2026

Fellow Floridians -

On behalf of the men and women of the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs (FDVA), I welcome you to the 28th Annual Family Café. The Family Café superbly empowers individuals with disabilities and their families as a facilitator of communication, a space for dialogue and a source of vital information.

As a state agency representing Florida's nearly 1.4 million Veterans, their families and survivors, we are proud to join you and your fellow delegates in the spirit of collaboration, advocacy, friendship and empowerment.

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

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



James S. Hartsell

"THE GREAT TWENTY-EIGHT!"



Kevin Guthrie

THE 28TH ANNUAL

FAMILY CAFÉ

STATE OF FLORIDA DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Ron DeSantis, Governor Kevin Guthrie, Executive Director

Dear Family Café Participants:

On behalf of the Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM), it is a privilege to celebrate this milestone—the 28th Annual Family Café, the "Great 28." For nearly three decades, the Family Café has brought together families, caregivers, advocates, and state partners to share knowledge, strengthen connections, and expand access to essential resources. At FDEM, our mission is rooted in preparedness, accessibility, and community. We are committed to ensuring all Floridians, especially those with unique needs, have the support necessary to navigate any disaster. I encourage you to take full advantage of this comprehensive collection of resources designed to assist you before, during, and after emergencies.

The 2026 Atlantic Hurricane Season begins June 1 and runs through November 30. Preparedness is an ongoing responsibility—just one storm can change everything. Staying connected to resources and having a clear plan can make all the difference when an emergency arises. Stay informed by signing up for emergency alerts at FloridaDisaster.org/AlertFlorida and be sure to have multiple ways to receive updated information. The Special Needs Registry is another available resource that helps Floridians prepare for the unexpected. This online registry connects residents with local emergency management and health officials, helping first responders better understand and meet individual needs during an emergency. Taking a few moments to register can make a significant difference in how assistance is provided when it is needed most. Visit FloridaDisaster.org/SNR or reach out to your local county emergency management office to take advantage of this resource and get connected with your community.

Building a disaster supply kit is a critical step in disaster preparation. Each household member should have at least seven days' worth of essentials like nonperishable food, water, a weather radio, medications and devices, having backup batteries or alternative power sources is especially important. For a full disaster supply kit checklist and additional preparedness resources, explore FloridaMakeAPlan.com to ensure you

FDEM is proud to stand alongside you—not just during hurricane season, but every day. As you participate in this year's Family Café, we hope you gain valuable insights, discover new resources, and feel empowered by the strength of this community. The "Great 28" reflects shared commitment—28 years of trust, advocacy, connection and progress. Remember, your local emergency management office is always a trusted resource for guidance tailored to your community. Together, Florida is ready and resilient!

Sincerely,

Kevin Guthrie
Executive Director

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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
 fldoe.org

Anastasios Kamoutas
 Commissioner of Education

June 12, 2026

Dear Conference Attendees:

Welcome to the 28th Annual Family Café and Governor's Summit on Disabilities. This innovative event brings together individuals with disabilities and their families to share information, connect with resources and build meaningful partnerships. The Florida Department of Education (FDOE) remains committed to ensuring that all students have access to high-quality education options for Florida's nearly 3.2 million students.

Florida continues to prioritize protecting parental rights, investing in educators, expanding access to services and improving outcomes for students with disabilities.

- Florida remains a national leader in education, as demonstrated by continued performance: The high school graduation rate of Florida's students with disabilities continues to increase, with 89.1% graduating in 2024-25. This is an increase of 23.1 percentage points since 2016-17.
- Florida was ranked #1 overall for the fourth year in a row by the Heritage Foundation on the 2025 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 topped the nation on the 2025 EdChoice Friedman Index, reflecting the state's expansive school choice programs and the availability of education savings accounts (ESA) for families to use for additional educational services.
- The center for Education Reform ranked Florida #1 on the Parent Power Index for the fourth consecutive year.

- The Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities (FES-UA), established in 2021, continues to provide families of students with disabilities, as young as 3 years of age, with access to additional educational resources. Through this program, families may receive a personal educational savings account, which allows funds to be used for a variety of approved educational services and supports tailored to their student's needs.
- An ESA can fund private school tuition and fees, online learning programs, private tutoring, specialized services, eligible post-secondary schooling, and other approved customized learning materials.

325 W. Gaines Street | Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400 | 850-245-0505
 www.fldoe.org



Anastasios Kamoutas

- Families apply and renew annual participation in an FES-UA through one of the approved scholarship funding organizations responsible for determining eligibility, awarding and distributing funding to eligible student accounts, and approving eligible expenditures.
- For the 2024-25 school year, 105,431 students received an FES-UA, with an average scholarship worth approximately \$10,000.00.
- Applications for the 2026-27 school year are now available. Families can apply through the Academic Achievement Accessible (AAA) Scholarship Foundation, Step Up For Students, or Sunshine State Kids. Information on the eligibility requirements, ESA and specialized services is as 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 individual 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.
 - Specialized services: Approved providers include licensed speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists and other providers.

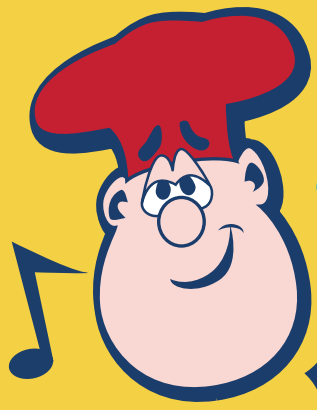
Florida continues to provide opportunities for families to make educational choices that best meet the needs of their children. Through strong partnerships with families, educators and community organizations, FDOE remains focused on improving outcomes and supporting every student's success.

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, gathering new information and resources through breakout sessions, the exhibit hall and keynote speakers.

Sincerely,

 Anastasios Kamoutas
 Commissioner

THE 28TH ANNUAL FAMILY CAFÉ
"THE GREAT TWENTY-EIGHT!"



FAMILY CAFE



THANKS TO OUR 2026 SPONSORS



YOU ROCK!





THANK YOU FROM THE...

FAMILY CAFÉ

"THE GREAT TWENTY-EIGHT!"



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



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 Healthy Kids Corporation

Florida PTA

Florida Youth Council

Mike DiMauro

SportsAbility Alliance

Sunshine Health

U.S. Military

7-Dippity





MEET THE FAMILY CAFÉ

"THE GREAT TWENTY-EIGHT!"

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.

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Lori Fahey, President and CEO

Jeremy Countryman, Vice President

Sarah Fahey, Event Manager

Tanya Hansen, Financial Administrator



FAMILY CAFÉ



"THE GREAT TWENTY-EIGHT!"

CAFÉ 101

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 **four 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**.
- 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 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

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FLORIDA MILITARY FAMILY SPECIAL NEEDS NETWORK

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**THE FAMILY
CAFÉ**















FAMILY CAFÉ



"THE GREAT TWENTY-EIGHT!"

TRACKED SESSIONS

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.

 ADVOCACY	 ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY	 BIRTH TO AGE FIVE	 DADS	 DISASTER PREPAREDNESS	 EMPLOYMENT
 GUARDIANSHIP AND ALTERNATIVES	 MENTAL HEALTH	 MILITARY FAMILIES	 RECREATION	 SMART MONEY	 YOUTH

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.*

The family changing room is located in Silver Spring I. Sign language (ASL) interpreters are available in Silver Spring II.

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

Apple



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FRIDAY

JUNE 12, 2026

1:30 pm to 3:00 pm

Opening Session and Keynote Address
Plaza International Ballroom

Uncovering Injustices And Policy Failures



JOSEPH SHAPIRO

**"THE GREAT
TWENTY-EIGHT!"**

As a Correspondent on NPR's Investigations Unit, Joe Shapiro writes stories for NPR's popular news shows that uncover injustices and policy failures – and then have impact.

After his 2021 stories exposed how states take the Social Security checks of foster youth, who then leave foster care broke, 31 states and municipalities ended or modified the practice. A series on campus sexual assault (2010) led to new Obama Administration guidance to universities and a series on the epidemic of sexual assault of people with intellectual disabilities (2018) led to laws in several states.

Another series exposed a little-known practice of prisons to put two men into tiny "double-cell solitary confinement" – locked down 23 or 24 hours a day in a cell the size of a parking space – and how that led to a rise in prisoner-on-prisoner violence and killings. As a result, the federal government closed units at two prisons (2016, 2022). Shapiro's stories on the way rising court fines and fees create an unequal system of justice for the poor (2014) created an early understanding of the rise of "modern day debtors' prisons." Stories with on the questionable science used to convict people of "shaken-baby syndrome" (2012) helped free two people from prison.

Shapiro is known for his ground-breaking reporting on disability and is the author of "No Pity: People with Disabilities Forging a New Civil Rights Movement" (1993), considered a "classic" of disability literature. For NPR, a series on the failure of the states and federal government to provide home and community based long-term care (2010) exposed the growing number of young people living in nursing homes. And his story on a quadriplegic teen stuck in a hospital for six years pushed officials in North Carolina to find attendant and nursing staff and an apartment for her (2024, 2025).

Shapiro switched from print to radio reporting when he came to NPR in November 2001. He spent nine years on NPR's Science Desk, covering health, aging, disability and children's and family issues, including the mental and physical health issues of injured veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. In 2010, he joined NPR's newly formed Investigations Unit.

Among honors for his investigative journalism, Shapiro received Peabody, duPont-Columbia, Polk, Robert F. Kennedy, Edward R. Murrow, Sigma Delta Chi and other awards and was a Pulitzer Prize finalist. Before coming to NPR, Shapiro worked at *U.S. News & World Report* as a social policy reporter, the magazine's Rome bureau chief, politics reporter, White House correspondent and congressional reporter.

He lives in Washington, D.C., where he grew up, and is a graduate of Carleton College and the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism.





FRIDAY

JUNE 12, 2026

THE 28TH ANNUAL

FAMILY CAFÉ
JUNE 12-14

8:00 am to 6:00 pm
 9:00 am to 6:00 pm
 9:00 am to 6:00 pm
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 10:00 am to 6:00 pm
 11:00 am to 11:30 am
 11:00 am to 11:30 am
11:30 am to 12:30 pm
 11:30 am to 4:00 pm
 11:30 am to 6:00 pm

1:00 pm to 1:30 pm
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 4:30 pm to 5:00 pm
5:00 pm to 6:00 pm
 6:00 pm to 6:30 pm
 6:30 pm to 7:00 pm
7:00 pm to 8:30 pm

Registration Open, Registration Desk
 ABLE United Enrollment Hub, Blue Spring II
 The Florida Disability History Timeline, Upper Springs Foyer
 The Molina Healthcare Family Hub, Rainbow Spring I
 Exhibit Hall, Regency Ballroom
 Book Fair, Regency Q
 Cafe Connections, Columbia 35/36
 SportsAbility Sampler, Regency O - P
 Henry's Friendly Sensory Farm, Orlando M
 Florida Community Care Discovery Hub, Blue Spring I
 Pawesome Spot, Columbia 37
 Club Cafe, Orlando L
 Red Carpet Experience, Plaza Intl Foyer
 Performance by the Pyramid Players, Regency Rotunda

CONCURRENT SESSIONS
 Disability History Media Room, Coral Spring I
 PS/Rtl Technology and Learning Connections
 Hands-On Tech Expo, Manatee Spring I
 Performance by Trey Keesling, Plaza Intl Foyer
 Red Carpet Experience, Plaza Intl Foyer
 Performance by The Superstarz, Regency Rotunda

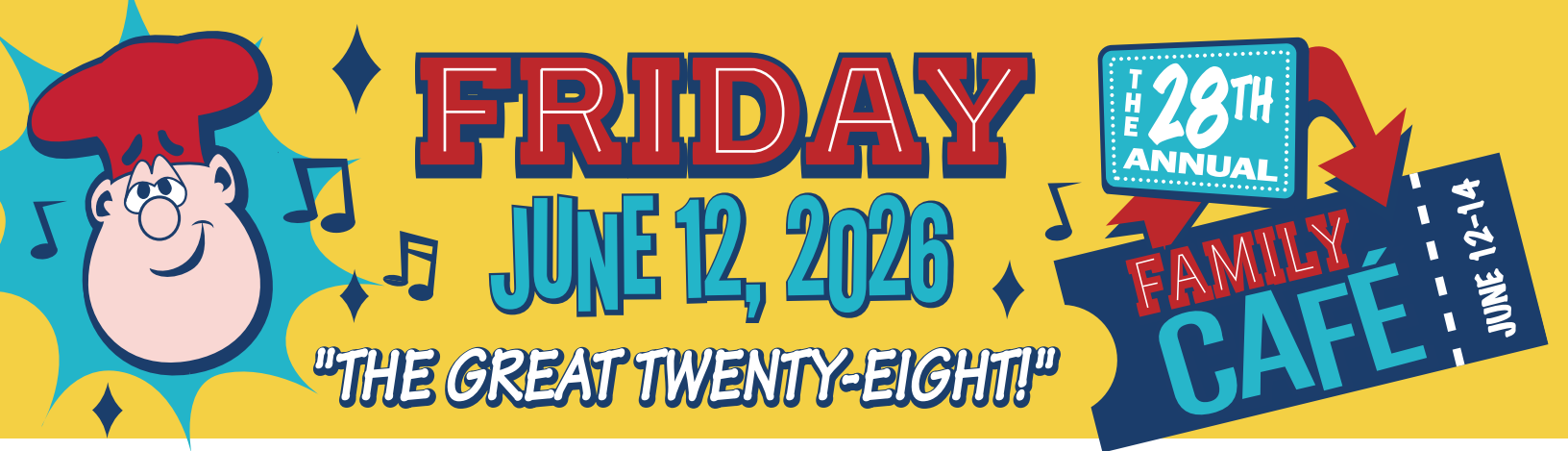
Friday Keynote - Joseph Shapiro, Plaza Intl Ballroom
 Red Carpet Experience, Plaza Intl Foyer
 Performance by the Pyramid Players, Regency Rotunda

CONCURRENT SESSIONS
 Red Carpet Experience, Plaza Intl Foyer
 Gatorland Animal Show: Live Alligators and Crocodiles, Regency O - P
 Performance by the Pyramid Players, Regency Rotunda

CONCURRENT SESSIONS
 Performance by Milosz Gasior, Regency Rotunda
 Performance by St. John & Friends, Plaza Intl Foyer

Annual Summit on Disabilities, Plaza Intl Ballroom





11:30 am to 12:30 pm CONCURRENT SESSIONS



For Dads: Getting Involved

Bayhill 17

11:30 am to 12:30 pm

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

Mark Keith

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

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Learn How Black Families Mitigate Disability Care Disparities: Identifying Resources in Florida

Bayhill 18

11:30 am to 12:30 pm

There are many barriers to quality care for Black families with disabilities. Poverty can impact access to care and social services. Black children are too often misdiagnosed with behavioral problems rather than learning disabilities. Treatment is often delayed because of a late diagnosis of autism. There are very few culturally adapted treatments for autism and service providers lack cultural training. Learning to identify these issues can help remove those barriers and improve the quality of care.

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Supporting Students who are Blind/Visually Impaired (B/VI) & Deaf/Hard of Hearing (DHH)

Bayhill 19

11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Join experts from FIMC-VI and RMTC-DHH as they share resources and creative ideas designed to support children who are blind, visually impaired, deaf, hard of hearing, or have combined sensory needs. This session invites families into a world of possibilities where access means more than accommodation. Explore environments, unlock communication strategies, and dive into assistive technologies that spark independence and confidence. Learn how to champion your child's success, collaborate with educators, and raise expectations that inspire growth. Whether your child navigates the world by touch, sound, or both, this presentation equips you with practical tools and uplifting guidance to help them thrive.

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Facilitated IEPs: Building Collaborative Partnerships

Bayhill 20

11:30 am to 12:30 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 too 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.

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Carol Beitler
FDLRS Reach

Hope in Action: The Hope Florida Initiative

Bayhill 21

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
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Dispute Resolution and Monitoring (DRM) Alternative Resolution Options

Bayhill 22

11:30 am to 12:30 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.

Bryce Milton

Inclusion and Advocacy in the Church

Bayhill 23

11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Have you ever felt like you don't belong, or people do not see you for your full potential? Eighty percent of people and families with disabilities do not attend church because they feel like they do not belong. The truth is that the church is a place where we should all grow and learn. This workshop will include firsthand experiences and ideas of educating churches in the use of culturally correct terminology when speaking to and about people with disabilities. It will also discuss how to bridge the gap in understanding between the church community and individuals with diverse abilities and their families.

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How People with Autism and Down Syndrome Can Work to Be Successful

Bayhill 24

11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Marlynnne Stutzman completed the IronMan, setting the World Record in the PC/ID category. She's a compelling speaker and an advocate for people with intellectual disabilities. She will share with you how with determination, practice, and a goal, a person with disabilities can be successful. This session will include a discussion group to recognize and solve problems faced by people with disabilities. We will discuss understanding yourself, making achievement goals, and understanding the value of work. Each person will list their disabilities and ideas about how to control their disabilities.

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Unbridled Hope: Finding Freedom Through Therapeutic Riding

Bayhill 25

11:30 am to 12:30 pm

In this session, we're diving into the importance of therapeutic horseback riding as a part of recovery and the journey of working through disability. Therapeutic riding has encouraged Catherine and Jason to push the limits of their recovery by participating in Special Olympics and fun shows at their barn. It's a reminder that healing can take many forms, and sometimes, it comes with four hooves, a gentle nudge, and the quiet rhythm of a horse's stride.

Catherine Garrett

Jason Sango

Special GALS: Supporting Girls and Women with Disabilities Across a Lifetime

Bayhill 26

11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Special GALS is a framework that centers girls and women with disabilities as whole people with evolving social, emotional, and wellness needs across the lifespan. G-Growth, A-Advocacy, L-Life Skills, and S-Social Connection guide this approach, emphasizing dignity, respect, health, and protection at every stage of life. This presentation explains why gender-responsive advocacy matters and how families and providers can support communication, regulation, healthcare, and meaningful participation. Attendees will gain practical strategies, reflection tools, and resource ideas to help disabled girls and women live safer, healthier, and more connected lives.

Mona Nasser

Special GALS

ynznasser@aol.com

Let Them Be Superheroes: Empowering Identity in Young Adults on the Autism Spectrum

Bayhill 27

11:30 am to 12:30 pm

What happens when we stop trying to make autistic young adults fit into the world, and instead help them build a world where they can shine? In this uplifting and practical session, parent and advocate Teresia Dulaney shares how supporting her son's creation of his superhero persona "Tommy Man" transformed his confidence, communication, and sense of purpose. Through relatable stories and actionable steps, attendees will learn how to help autistic individuals discover their talents, celebrate their identity, and pursue meaningful passions. This talk offers inspiration, hope, and real-world guidance for parents, caregivers, and educators.

Teresia Dulaney

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EFMP Respite Care

Bayhill 28

11:30 am to 12:30 pm

This session will introduce EFMP Respite Care, a vital support program for military families caring for children with moderate to profound disabilities. We will discuss the program's purpose, which entails providing temporary relief to caregivers by connecting families with qualified, thoroughly vetted providers. The presentation will cover eligibility criteria for active-duty Navy and Air Force EFMP families, emphasizing the importance of safety, provider training, and ongoing quality assurance. Attendees will learn about the operational aspects, including the scheduling process, policies, and communication protocols that ensure reliable and professional care. The session will highlight the benefits of EFMP Respite Care in reducing caregiver stress, enhancing family resilience, and promoting a balanced family dynamic. We will conclude with resources for families seeking further assistance and how the program supports the overall well-being of military families.

Bryant Patterson

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Caregiver Well-being / Creative Caregiving: Making Meaningful Connections Through the Arts

Bayhill 30

11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Join creative health practitioner Kaileigh Anne Tayek for an engaging, hands-on workshop exploring evidence-based arts in health practices that foster connection among care partners. Participants will experience practical, replicable art activities designed to spark creativity, enhance communication, and enrich the caregiving experience. While the session focuses on caregivers and their partners, all are welcome to discover how integrating the arts can strengthen relationships and transform care.

Kaileigh Anne Tayek

Providing Autism Links & Support



Is It Time?

Bayhill 31

11:30 am to 12:30 pm

This session will be co-hosted by a licensed therapist and a special needs parent, offering both professional insight and lived experience. Together, they will explore common hesitations around therapy, how to recognize when it may be the right time to bring a therapist into your family's support system, and what therapy can look like across different stages and situations. Topics will also include behavioral challenges, family and peer relationships, emotional regulation, social struggles, navigating life transitions, and building confidence in the decision to seek support.

Heather Dorries

Korin Menard



Building Hope & Skills: Helping Families Understand Behavior Change

Bayhill 32

11:30 am to 12:30 pm

This presentation is designed to empower families by bridging the gap between behavioral science and everyday parenting. “Building Hope & Skills” introduces accessible strategies grounded in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) that help caregivers understand the “why” behind their child’s behavior and learn practical tools to support positive change. Through relatable examples, interactive discussion, and evidence-based guidance, participants will explore how to identify the function of behavior, teach replacement skills, and reinforce desired outcomes in ways that promote growth and reduce frustration at home. The session also emphasizes the emotional side of behavior, helping parents shift from feeling overwhelmed to confident, hopeful, and equipped to foster meaningful progress in their child’s development. Attendees will leave with a clear framework for: understanding the ABCs of behavior (Antecedent, Behavior, Consequence); recognizing the role of motivation and reinforcement; implementing proactive strategies to prevent problem behaviors; and promoting skill-building through consistent, compassionate teaching. This presentation is ideal for parents, educators, and professionals seeking to collaborate with families in creating supportive, structured environments that encourage both learning and connection.

Brianna Cashman

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The Science of Self-Care

Bayhill 33

11:30 am to 12:30 pm



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 session 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



Becoming Adult(ish): Disability & Independence

Celebration 1

11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Growing up with a disability can come with big changes, and big questions about the future. This session is all about helping teens and young adults get ready for the move from childhood into adulthood with confidence. We’ll talk about real-life topics like speaking up for yourself, making your own choices, planning for school or work after graduation, volunteering, and building independence at your own pace. Through honest conversations and relatable examples, this session reminds youth that there is no “one right path” to adulthood, and that support, strengths, and self-belief matter just as much as skills.

Serena Wetmore



Tell Your Story Through Comics: A Creative Workshop for Youth

Celebration 2

11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Storytelling and comics open spaces of artistic freedom and community. Join a relaxed storytelling circle, then workshop ways to turn your stories into comics. Stimming, ASL, Spanish speakers, and Augmentative and Alternative Communication welcome. Tell/draw a story about anything you like, but suggestions include: “What’s something you’re proud of?” “What’s magic to you?” “What parts of your background give you strength?” “What do you worry about?” “What do you wish everyone understood about young people’s mental health?” This session is hosted by Betsy Wheeler, a professor, comics writer, and inclusive theater director who loves making art with other disabled and neurodivergent people.

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Increasing Access and Literacy Through Adapted Books

Celebration 3

11:30 am to 12:30 pm

People of ALL abilities deserve the right to read, interact with text, and share meaningful literary experiences. Adapted books bridge the gap to literacy by transforming traditional texts into accessible, engaging tools for ALL learners, especially individuals with disabilities.

In this session, participants will explore the purpose and power of adapted books, learn about the research behind them, and see examples featuring simplified language, visual supports, tactile elements, and interactive components. These adaptations increase access, engagement, language development, and comprehension. Come discover how adapted books can transform literacy instruction and open doors for every learner across ages, abilities, and settings.

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From Credit-Invisible to Empowered: Understanding and Building Credit

Celebration 4

11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Credit is a key financial tool, yet many people with disabilities are “credit invisible.” This session, led by the National Disability Institute (NDI) and Experian, explores why credit matters, how to check your credit reports and scores, and how to safely build credit to gain visibility and access to the financial system.

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Long-Term Care Planning for Parents/Guardians of Individuals with Special Needs

Celebration 5

11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Parents of individuals with special needs often spend decades focused on caregiving, advocacy, and protecting their child's future. What is frequently overlooked is how those same caregiving demands can increase a parent's own likelihood of needing long-term care later in life. This presentation helps families understand why long-term care planning is not optional, but essential, for protecting both the caregiver and the person they support. The session explains what long-term care truly is, how and when care is needed, and why parents of special needs children face unique physical, emotional, and financial risks as they age. Drawing on caregiver health research, the presentation connects daily caregiving responsibilities to higher rates of fatigue, injury, and chronic health issues. Attendees learn how long-term care coverage can preserve assets, reduce the burden placed on other children, and help ensure continued support for a special needs trust. The presentation compares reimbursement and cash-based benefit models, highlighting the flexibility of cash benefits to support care at home, family caregivers, and evolving care needs. The core message is simple: long-term care planning is not about predicting where care will happen, but about protecting choice, dignity, and family stability. When parents plan for their own care, they strengthen the long-term security of their entire family.

Shawn Britt
Nationwide Financial

Middi Dzihic
Nationwide Financial



ABCs and 123s of SNTs

Celebration 6

11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Attendees will learn the basics of Special Needs Trusts (SNTs). We will discuss the different types of SNTs, who needs one, and what benefits it will protect.

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Early Identification of Developmental Concerns and the Referral Process in the School Readiness Program

Celebration 7

11:30 am to 12:30 pm

This presentation will examine the importance of developmental screenings within School Readiness Programs to facilitate early identification of children who may have developmental concerns. It will also detail the referral process to ensure families are connected to appropriate early intervention services.

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Making Sense out of Sensory Processing

Celebration 8

11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Many children are identified as having “sensory processing difficulties.” This may be evident by sensory seeking or avoidant behaviors, overreaction, or under-reaction to stimuli. “What does this mean and why does my child behave in certain ways?” “How do I help my child regulate and feel comfortable in different situations?” These are questions parents and caregivers ask about children of all ages. As occupational therapists and early intervention specialists, we will help explain the basics of early sensory development and discuss strategies that may help families create optimal sensory environments and support regulation so family routines run smoothly.

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Advocacy After 18

Celebration 9

11:30 am to 12:30 pm

This presentation is for families who are in the process of having their children with special needs transition into adulthood. Service providers who care for individuals with disabilities during their transition into adulthood would also benefit from the information provided. An overview of the topics discussed include guardianship, guardianship advocacy, alternatives to guardianship, and benefits as well as limitations to guardianship and its alternatives. A copy of the presentation can be made available upon request.

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FAMILY CAFÉ
"THE GREAT TWENTY-EIGHT!"



Pathways to Possibility: Planning for Successful Post-Secondary Education for Students with Intellectual Disabilities

Celebration 10

11:30 am to 12:30 pm

This session guides families in preparing students with intellectual disabilities for college, starting in middle school. Attendees will explore strategies for fostering self-advocacy, promoting academic and social skill development, and setting high expectations. Learn actionable strategies for collaborating with middle and high school educators to create personalized transition plans. Attendees will gain practical tools to empower their children to successfully matriculate and thrive in post-secondary environments.

Session objectives include identifying early planning strategies for post-secondary education beginning in middle school; describing effective collaboration techniques between families and school staff during transitions; and exploring ways to build student self-advocacy and independence for college readiness.

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Preparing for Adulting: WIOA, Transition, and Finances for Students with Disabilities

Celebration 12

11:30 am to 12:30 pm



This session is about empowering individuals in making an informed choice regarding a young adult's transitional life choices. Topics include transition, Florida's Vocational Rehabilitation agencies, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), protected Medicaid, and post-secondary education services and support. The main goal of this session is to equip attendees with basic knowledge of services and programs for the transition-aged student/adult.

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How Social Security Unlocks Medicaid, APD, and Long-term Care Community-Based Services

Celebration 13

11:30 am to 12:30 pm

For many individuals with disabilities, Social Security benefits are not just income support. They are the gateway to Medicaid eligibility for long-term care services and home- and community-based supports through either APD or the long-term care waiver program through Florida Medicaid. Having a clear understanding of these programs is essential in navigating and establishing a clear path for a person with a disability.

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Badge and Blueprint: A Retired Officer’s Guide to Safe Interactions for Autistic Youth

Celebration 14

11:30 am to 12:30 pm

This session bridges the gap between law enforcement protocols and the lived experiences of autistic individuals. Presented by a retired police officer and Director of Learning Differences, we address the disparity in satisfaction regarding police encounters. Attendees receive a practical “blueprint” for safer outcomes, focusing on how officers misinterpret behaviors like stimming or echolalia as resistance. We explore the “Justice League” advocate model, discuss safety strategies for disabled youth, and provide families with proactive tools to prevent misunderstandings. Our goal is to replace fear with actionable knowledge and hands-on de-escalation strategies for every Florida family.

Valerie Hall

St. Thomas University



Self-Advocacy: How to Help Children Speak Up for Themselves

Celebration 15

11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Self-advocacy is speaking up for yourself and your rights by communicating your thoughts, needs, and preferences. Children can self-advocate by saying no to things they don’t want, making decisions about what they do want, and asking for help when they need it. If you help your child develop the skills they need for self-advocacy when they’re young, they will be better prepared to advocate for themselves as they get older. When your child turns 18, your parental rights will be automatically transferred to them, unless guardianship has been established. This session will help parents learn how they can teach their children to self-advocate, which will prepare them for their future beyond high school.

Stacey Hoaglund

FDDC Partners in Policymaking



Learn About Your Florida Developmental Disabilities Council

Celebration 16

11:30 am to 12:30 pm

The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council (FDDC) is a very important part of the organizations that advocate for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/DD). Included in both federal and state legislation, and funded with federal funds, the FDDC plays an important role in supporting systems change activities that will positively impact quality of life for people with ID/DD. This presentation will introduce Floridians to the Council and its important work.

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Creating Opportunities for the Wow

Coral Spring II

11:30 am to 12:30 pm

This workshop focuses on how to create the community we want for our kids. Examples include community opportunities like Scouts and FIRST Robotics, and how to take a leadership role to create the space we envision and need. Both of these organizations are full of opportunities and are adaptive in so many ways. They provide practical skills, fun, social opportunities, and wow after wow of unexpected delights. I have been both a Scout leader (20 years) and a robotics coach (12 years). I would love to share how those and other community resources have made a huge impact on not just my son, but so many others with and without disabilities. I will also share the benefits of taking a leadership role in any organization that fits your family’s interests - while also removing the fear factor.

Lisa Curley
Gracious Youth, Inc

Connor Curley
Gracious Youth, Inc



Small Movements, Big Shifts

Manatee Spring II

11:30 am to 12:30 pm

This session offers a gentle, fully accessible chair-based embodiment experience that demonstrates how small, intentional movements can create meaningful shifts in the nervous system. Rather than focusing on performance, flexibility, or strength, participants are guided to listen to their body’s cues and explore regulation through choice, pacing, and awareness. Drawing from trauma-informed yoga, somatic practices, and neuroscience made accessible, this experience supports participants in reconnecting with their bodies as sources of safety and information without pressure, force, or expectation. This session is for individuals experiencing chronic stress, overwhelm, or fatigue, as well as caregivers, educators, and helping professionals, and will be helpful for anyone who feels disconnected from their body and people seeking gentle, practical tools for regulation. Participants will leave with a felt understanding of how small movements support nervous-system regulation, chair-based practices they can use in everyday life, increased trust in their body’s signals, and a sense of agency and choice in how they move and rest.

Ponnappa Smith
Blooming Purple Lotus

Florida Community Care (FCC): Advancing IDD Care Across Florida

Orlando N

11:30 am to 12:30 pm



**Florida
community care**



Florida Community Care (FCC) is the managed care plan selected by the state to operate Florida's Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Comprehensive Managed Care (ICMC) Program for adults (18+) with IDD — now serving individuals statewide. This session will highlight how FCC coordinates access to medical, behavioral, and long-term care services, including pharmacy, meals, transportation, and more. We'll also explore the Florida Participant Direction Option (PDO), which allows Medicaid recipients to self-direct their own care and services. FCC's leadership team will share insights from the field and discuss what statewide expansion means for the future of IDD care in Florida. Whether you're a family member, caregiver, provider, or advocate, this session will help you understand how FCC supports independence, choice, and well-being.

Carol Gormely
Florida Community Care

Tatiana Pita
Florida Community Care

Cecile Comrie
PPL

Connected Caregiving Across Distance After Loss or Change

Peacock Spring

11:30 am to 12:30 pm

When a family's caregiving structure changes due to loss, illness, or separation, care does not end, it evolves. In this session, Mary Burton and Bridgit Burton Brown share how they partner across state lines after the passing of a parent, with Mary becoming the sole in-home caregiver to a minor child with a disability. Through real-life examples, they explore how families can share advocacy, decision-making, and emotional support using communication tools, technology, and intentional planning. Participants will leave with practical strategies for sustaining caregiving partnerships, even when family members are not physically together.

Mary Burton
celebratecnb@gmail.com

Bridgit Burton Brown



Hands On @ Hyatt - A 28-Year Public/Private Partnership that Works

Plaza Intl Ballroom

11:30 am to 12:30 pm

This session will illustrate how public and private entities can partner to provide inclusive PAID training opportunities for individuals with disabilities. The program director will be joined by Hyatt Area HR Director, Mark Havard, who will provide the "Hyatt Perspective." We will also have one or two program graduates who will share their professional journey. This Hands On @ Hyatt Hospitality Training Program began in June 1998 at one Hyatt Hotel in Tampa. The program expanded through the years, and is now operating at Hyatt Hotels in FL, MN, CO, CA and WA State. It is made possible through a unique partnership with Hyatt, Vocational Rehabilitation, local school districts, and service providers.

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Mark Havard
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1:00 pm to 1:30 pm

1:00 pm to 1:30 pm

1:00 pm to 1:30 pm

1:30 pm to 3:00 pm

3:00 pm to 3:30 pm

3:00 pm to 3:30 pm

Performance by Trey Keesling, Plaza Intl Foyer

Red Carpet Experience, Plaza Intl Foyer

Performance by The Superstarz, Regency Rotunda

Friday Keynote – Joseph Shapiro, Plaza Intl Ballroom

Red Carpet Experience, Plaza Intl Foyer

Performance by the Pyramid Players, Regency Rotunda



3:30 pm to 4:30 pm CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Adaptive Cooking Interactive Session

Barrel Spring I

3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

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.

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Role Playing Session

Barrel Spring II

3:30 pm to 6:00 pm

It's time for good old fashioned imaginative play – no video games or technology. We will again create a story for the group to engage in. Veteran role-players and newcomers are all welcome, as the adventure will require all participants to engage with their unique strengths. This event is for all youth, although some may benefit from having a caregiver present as the tasks may require support. This event is delivered by John Ferrone, a 45-year veteran Dungeon Master, who will facilitate the adventure so that everyone can be involved. Bring your dungeon dice, and if you don't have a set, we'll have some for you. (Please note: this session is scheduled to last two and a half hours to allow time for game play.)

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Dads in a Mom's World: Showing Up, Finding Our Way, and Getting It Done

Bayhill 17

3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

This session offers a candid and often humorous look at life as a dad navigating the special needs world – a space largely shaped by moms who excel at the day-to-day work. While the goals are shared, dads often experience the journey differently, learning as they go and finding their own way to contribute. Drawing from real-life experience as a single father, Rich shares challenges, missteps, and lessons learned while building confidence, advocacy, and partnership. This session validates dads, honors moms, and reminds us that when we respect each other's strengths, our children benefit most.

Rich Mistkowski

Mattie & Me

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Music and Students Who Are Deaf/Hard of Hearing

Bayhill 18

3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Music has a powerful ability to connect people, elicit emotions, solidify memories, and change moods. The ability to appreciate music is not limited to those with auditory access. Participants will receive information on music and consumers who are deaf/hard of hearing. Common barriers to music instruction and components of Universal Design for Learning, as well as specialized accommodations for students who are deaf/hard of hearing to access music, will be addressed. Strategies for increasing accessibility for listeners of varying ages and hearing levels will be shared, as well as famous musicians who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Sherry Conrad

sherry.conrad@rmtcdhh.org

Helping Our Children Become Superheroes Against Sexual Harm

Bayhill 19

3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

This session will introduce families, caregivers, advocates, teachers, mental health practitioners, and human service professionals to proactive solutions that help children become superheroes in order to combat sexual harm. Learning objectives include examining the statistics of the silent epidemic, identifying grooming tactics of abusers for various age groups, determining the signs of victimization, understanding the importance of reporting to law enforcement, describing the strategies for prevention that allow youth to become proactive against sexual harm, adopting the appropriate responses to victims that report their sex assault, and encouraging the need for mental health support.

Lisa Smith

Right2Consent

Child Abuse Investigation in a Family with a Special Needs Child

Bayhill 20

3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

This presentation explores child abuse investigations involving families of children with disabilities, grounded in both professional practice and lived experience. Drawing on my work as a Child Protective Investigator with the Manatee County Sheriff's Office and DCF, and my current role as an ASD self-contained teacher, I examine how heightened caregiving demands - limited respite, sleep deprivation, financial strain, and social isolation - can contribute to caregiver burnout. Behavioral and communication challenges may further elevate stress, increasing the risk of maltreatment. The presentation emphasizes prevention, empathy, and systems of support for families.

Ivana Ruiz

McKenzie Roman

Hear the Roar: Advocating Like a Mama Bear

Bayhill 21

3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

This empowering and lighthearted session – sprinkled with humor and real-life insight – equips parents and caregivers with tools to confidently advocate for their child's needs. Participants will learn how to stay organized, build connections, navigate gatekeepers, and know when and how to escalate concerns. The presentation includes practical tips for collaborating with professionals, including medical professionals and therapists, plus a tool to use during appointments and medical emergencies. Filled with encouragement and laughter, it reminds parents they're never alone on this journey.

Kenya Edwards Meeks

Understanding Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) and Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) for Students with Disabilities

Bayhill 22

3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

This professional learning session provides a foundational overview of Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) and the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). Participants will learn the purpose of each framework and how they support students with disabilities in accessing instruction and special education services. The session will clarify key terminology, outline core components, and highlight best practices for the implementation of SDI and MTSS. Educators and families will leave with a shared understanding of how these systems work together to support student success.

Monica Reeves

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Erin Daughtry

Erin.Daughtry@fldoe.org



Understanding Sensory Challenges

Bayhill 23

3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

This presentation is designed to help parents and caregivers gain insight into sensory challenges experienced by individuals and learn effective strategies for support. Together, we will explore sensory responses and behavioral responses, two reactions that may appear similar but originate from different causes. Participants will gain clarity on how to identify sensory-driven behavior versus behavior-based reactions and learn practical ways to respond with compassion and intention. By the end of the session, you will have strategies and tools to better support individuals with diverse needs across home, school, and community settings.

Matthew Take

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Stronger Than You Know: A Mother's Guide to Surviving, Advocating, and Staying Whole in the World of Complex Disabilities

Bayhill 24

3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Mothering a disabled child can bring profound love, profound exhaustion, and a constant feeling of living in crisis mode. In this honest and uplifting workshop, attorney and author Nancy Ferraro shares her journey raising a child with complex disabilities rooted in early trauma – and the emotional, practical, and legal strategies that helped her survive. This session provides tools for self-preservation, advocacy, boundary-setting, and rebuilding identity beyond caregiving. Moms will leave feeling seen, validated, and equipped with real-world strategies for navigating systems, protecting themselves, and sustaining hope.

Nancy Ferraro

Ferraro Law, PA

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Stories That Connect Us: An Inclusive Book Club Model For Every Ability

Bayhill 25

3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Imagine a book club where stories come alive, friendships grow, and everyone has a voice. The Next Chapter Book Club offers an accessible model for literacy and community engagement. This presentation gives attendees a hands-on look at how the program works and how to bring it to their communities. It provides individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities a fun, meaningful way to participate in reading while building skills, confidence, and friendship and is especially geared toward older teens and adults participating. This session shows families how to partner with local libraries to create inclusive book clubs that strengthen community, reduce isolation, and foster lasting connections.

Jen Power

Maitland Public Library

Betsy Fulmer

Maitland Public Library

Still Dreaming: Living a Full Life on Your Own Terms

Bayhill 26

3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Living with a disability often means navigating expectations shaped not only by society, but also by well-intentioned families and caregivers who are trying to protect, plan, or prepare. This workshop invites individuals with disabilities to explore how external expectations can quietly shape internal limits – and how to reclaim the right to dream, choose, and grow. Through mindset shifts and practical reflection tools, participants will redefine success on their own terms and design a life rooted in autonomy, purpose, and joy. For many individuals with disabilities, expectations are shaped early – by systems, culture, and often by loving families and caregivers who are doing their best in an uncertain world. Over time, these expectations can unintentionally narrow what feels possible, influencing how we see our future, our capabilities, and even our right to dream. This workshop is designed for individuals with disabilities who want to reconnect with their own vision for a meaningful life. Together, we'll explore how protective instincts, lowered expectations, and societal narratives can become internal limits – and how to gently examine, challenge, and reshape them. Grounded in lived experience and practical tools, this session offers a supportive space to clarify personal values, expand possibility, and design a life that fits who you are – not just who others imagine you to be. Participants will recognize how external expectations – including from family and caregivers – can influence personal goals, learn mindset shifts that support autonomy, confidence, and self-direction, explore ways to honor support while still claiming personal agency, clarify what “living your best life” means personally, not collectively, and leave with tools to continue dreaming and goal-setting in realistic, empowering ways.

Amber Davis

ALLORA – For What Comes Next

Understanding ADHD Together

Bayhill 27

3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

This session will present important information on ADHD and some of its comorbidities. It will provide strategies and resources for educators, families, friends, and those who are diagnosed with ADHD. The presenter will share insights about what ADHD is and how to navigate educational spaces to advocate for and support learners with ADHD of all ages. The session will also explore options to aid in supporting and mitigating some of the challenges that the diagnosis presents.

Shernette Dunn



Navigating Military Transitions into Adulthood

Bayhill 28

3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

This presentation provides a comprehensive overview of processes and considerations involved in supporting military special needs dependents as they transition into adulthood. Participants will explore how eligibility, services, and military & civilian benefits change as dependents enter adulthood. This session highlights key transition points including education, healthcare, legal considerations, and benefit continuity, while addressing common challenges faced by military families during this period. Attendees will gain practical strategies to ensure a smoother, well-informed transition into adulthood within the military community.

Angela O'Campo

Ta'Nashea McLeod

Preparing for Marriage with Disability

Bayhill 30

3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Society has largely ignored the possibility of someone with a disability getting married, let alone having a successful marriage. Challenges exist; they do in every marriage. Disability may amplify some, like the Social Security marriage penalty. Often, clergy and counselors have little to no experience in helping someone with a disability prepare for marriage. In this session, you'll learn from a couple married 30 years about what worked in their preparation, and what they wish they'd done.

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Talking About the Elephant in the Room: Suicide and How We Can Lower Our Risk

Bayhill 31

3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

As an AuDHD person, one of the biggest concerns I have for our community is the significantly higher rate of suicide. Autistics are nine times more likely to die by suicide than the general population, and ADHD makes that a fivefold increased risk of dying by suicide. What might be contributing to this discrepancy, and more importantly, what can we do to lower that risk?

Amy Bodkin
Amy Bodkin Consulting



Preventing Caregiver Burnout – Practical Self-Care Strategies That Actually Work

Bayhill 32

3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

This session will define caregiver burnout and help attendees to recognize at least three signs or symptoms in themselves or others. It will also describe the primary causes of caregiver burnout, including emotional, physical, and systemic factors. Attendees will practice micro self-care techniques (such as brief breathing exercises, breaks, and grounding tools) that can be used throughout the day. The presenter will also demonstrate effective emotional self-care strategies, including naming emotions, journaling, and recognizing personal stress triggers.

Mari Adams
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Building An Integrative Future For Mental Health Care

Bayhill 33
3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Building an integrative future for mental health care requires moving beyond fragmented systems toward coordinated, lifespan-oriented support. This presentation outlines a practical model that unites psychiatric care, behavioral health, and specialized therapies within one streamlined framework. By strengthening collaboration between clinicians, families, and educators - particularly teachers who observe early behavioral and emotional changes - we can improve identification, accelerate access, and enhance continuity of care for children, adolescents, and adults. The session highlights real-world strategies for creating interdisciplinary teams, aligning school-based insights with clinical decision-making, and designing care pathways that reduce delays and improve outcomes. It also explores the operational and cultural shifts organizations must adopt to sustain truly integrated services. Attendees will leave with actionable approaches to building responsive, equitable, and preventative systems - ones where mental health providers, families, and teachers work together to ensure individuals receive the right support at the right time, all within a cohesive and compassionate model of care.

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Advocacy Starts Here! Florida Youth Council Meet & Greet

Celebration 1
3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

The Florida Youth Council Meet & Greet is an exciting event where young leaders from across Florida come together to connect, share ideas, and ignite their passion for advocacy. Whether you're new to activism or already involved in creating change, this session provides an opportunity to connect with like-minded peers, learn about impactful initiatives, and discover how to amplify your voice in shaping the future. Get ready for an inspiring, fun-filled event that celebrates the power of youth-driven change and empowers you to take action in your community and beyond!

Shevie Barnes
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From Childhood Conflict to Young Adult Understanding: A Sibling's Story

Celebration 2
3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Hunter is a 28-year-old autistic young man with mental health challenges. Samara (Sami) is his slightly younger sister (26 years old). Tim is their Dad. We want to share how Hunter and Sami got along (or didn't get along) as they were growing up. They attended private school and public school and were even home schooled together. The exciting news is how their relationship has developed as they have grown up and are now both adults.

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FAAST Access Loan Program

Celebration 3
3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Learn about the FAAST financial loan program, including a new grant-funded home access program, providing new options for home modification loans to help alleviate struggles incurred due to excessive waiting lists, exhausted funding at the County or City level, or limited access to modifications due to income constraints, bank requirements, or lack of equity. The presentation will provide details on the loan program, including 0% options, financial education opportunities to help build or repair credit, and basics of saving and budgeting so important and life-changing purchases and expenses are available, regardless of income limitations.

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ABLE Accounts vs. Special Needs Trusts: Making the Right Choice for Your Family

Celebration 4
3:30 pm to 4:30 pm



Families often ask whether they need an ABLE account, a Special Needs Trust (SNT), or both. This session demystifies the differences by comparing cost, flexibility, impact on benefits, and ideal use cases for each. Director John Finch, as well as a financial professional, will share easy-to-understand decision-making tools that help families determine the best long-term planning approach. This session will address when an ABLE account is the better option; when a Special Needs Trust is more appropriate (first-party vs. third-party); why many families choose to use both; understanding Medicaid payback rules; and how ABLE accounts increase autonomy and accessible financial control for the beneficiary. This is a great session for parents, financial planners, elder-law attorneys, nonprofit partners, and caregivers looking for clearer direction on planning tools.

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Planning for a Special Needs Life Plan AND Retirement

Celebration 6

3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

This presentation will be a comprehensive talk on helping parents navigate through government benefits, trust and legal planning, financial planning, and how to protect all of these things to make sure the individual never loses benefits. We will also cover topics like ABLE accounts and Medwaiver.

Craig Eppy

Levanti Wealth

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Pediatric Feeding Challenges Explained: Practical Strategies for Everyday Success

Celebration 7

3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

From picky eating to tube feeding, this presentation explores pediatric feeding disorders and the resources available to support children and their families. Participants will gain an understanding of the medical, nutritional, feeding skill, and psychosocial factors that contribute to pediatric feeding disorder. This session highlights compassionate, evidence-based strategies to strengthen feeding skills and enhance mealtime experiences. Presented by a speech-language pathologist with over 20 years of feeding therapy experience, including sensory-motor feeding disorders, swallowing disorders, and care for children with medical complexities.

Kerry Glidewell

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Bridging Aging and I/DD Systems: Promising Practices from Florida and a National Initiative

Celebration 8

3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

This presentation highlights promising practices from Florida's Communities of Practice and a National Project of Significance focused on bridging aging and intellectual and developmental disability (I/DD) systems. Participants will learn how cross-network collaboration, workforce training, technology, and future planning improve support for aging individuals with I/DD and their caregivers. Examples include intake and referral processes and education. Attendees will learn about replicable models and resources to strengthen coordination, promote collaboration between the I/DD and aging communities, and support families.

Jennifer Chung and Christine Reeve are Program Directors at the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, overseeing I/DD and aging initiatives.

Jennifer Chung

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Preparing Families and Youth for Age of Majority: Empowering Self-Determination & Navigating Legal Rights

Celebration 9

3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

This newly developed training will provide attendees with an understanding of Florida’s age 17 legal requirements for transition; explain self-determination and its relevance to the transfer of educational rights that occur at age 18; identify and differentiate between the legal options for continued parent/guardian involvement; and, lastly, provide key information and instruction regarding decision-making alternatives that include youth participation to the fullest extent possible.

Jennifer Treadway
Project 10: Transition Education Network

Lisa Friedman-Chavez



Voting Rights and Accessibility for Self-Advocates

Celebration 10

3:30 pm to 4:30 pm



Voting is one of our nation’s most fundamental rights and a hallmark of our democracy, yet many people with disabilities face significant barriers to their exercise of the right to vote. This presentation will begin with a brief overview of federal, state, and local elections, then focus on disability-related voting topics including why having a disability doesn’t prevent an individual from voting, disability-related voting rights, having a plan to vote, registering to vote, assuring transportation to the poll site, what to expect on election day, accommodations for disabled voters, filling out the ballot, self-advocacy in voting, and the self-determination process and voting. Q&A as well as other interactive elements, such as creating a voting plan, will be included, and disability-related voting resources will be distributed.

James McCabe
Disability Rights FL

Laura Minutello
Disability Rights FL



Building Pathways to Employment and Independence for Individuals with IDD

Celebration 12

3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Goodwill empowers individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) through comprehensive programs, skills training, and wraparound supports. Our services focus on building independence, confidence, and real-world job skills that lead to meaningful employment and community inclusion. By meeting individuals where they are and supporting their unique goals, Goodwill helps people with IDD achieve greater self-sufficiency and long-term success at work and in life.

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Shop, Support, & Sell with Mainstreamed Marketplace

Celebration 13

3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Join us to explore Mainstreamed Marketplace, an inclusive marketplace platform showcasing businesses that are owned by, employ, or support the disability community. Learn how you can shop from inclusive businesses to support real careers. And if you run a business, discover how to set up your own store to reach a wider audience, grow your impact, and be part of a community where everyone's talents are celebrated.

Alexis Hunt

mainstreamedmarketplace.com



Building Your Family Emergency Plan: A Hands-On Workshop

Celebration 14

3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

This interactive workshop will guide families through creating a personalized emergency plan tailored to their child's unique needs. Participants will explore planning for evacuation, sheltering, medications, communication, and caregiver coordination. Using easy-to-follow tools and examples, families will begin developing a plan they can continue building at home. The focus is on practical preparation that supports safety, reduces stress, and strengthens family readiness.

Elizabeth M. Todak



Autism Advocacy Interrupted

Celebration 15

3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Today's autism community is louder than ever – but not always kinder or clearer. Caregivers are constantly navigating competing messages, clashing opinions, and advocacy “camps” that argue over therapy choices, inclusion vs. specialized supports, identity language, schooling decisions, adulthood expectations, and what “good advocacy” is supposed to look like. Add in social media judgment, public misunderstanding, and pressure from professionals, and it can feel like the very movement meant to support families is now dividing them.

“Autism Advocacy Interrupted” tackles the tension head-on. This session explores how advocacy has splintered, why caregivers often feel caught in the crossfire, and how those fractures impact families emotionally, relationally, and practically. Most importantly, it offers a way forward – grounded, compassionate, and unifying. Together we'll examine how to make confident decisions for your child, honor differing viewpoints without hostility, reduce the noise, and return to what truly matters: dignity, respect, and meaningful support for individuals with autism. This session acknowledges the conflict and division no one wants to talk about. It helps you sort through loud voices and find YOUR grounded advocacy path. It restores unity, compassion, and respect within the autism community. It empowers you to lead, speak, and stand strong without attacking others. It builds confidence in your voice, your choices, and your direction. If you've ever felt pressured, judged, unsure who to trust, or worn down by “advocacy wars,” this session offers clarity, courage, and a renewed sense of purpose.

Jeanetta Bryant

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The IEP Checklist Schools Don't Share: What Parents Need to Know Before the Meeting

Celebration 16

3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Feeling overwhelmed by the IEP process? Learn a simple, proven 10-step system to prepare for your next IEP meeting with confidence. In just one hour, you'll gain checklists and insider tips that help you understand services, ask the right questions, and ensure your child gets what they need next school year.

Sandra Rancano

NextSteps Educational Consulti



New Technologies, Partnerships, and Opportunities for Recreation for People of ALL Abilities

Coral Spring II

3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

SportsAbility Alliance develops partnerships and utilizes adaptive technology 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 being done, and how partnerships and technology can increase engagement. Share your ideas, knowledge, and experiences in this fun, interactive session!

David Jones

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Fran Gilbert

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Adaptive Martial Arts Class with 4X ISKA World Champion James Sang Lee

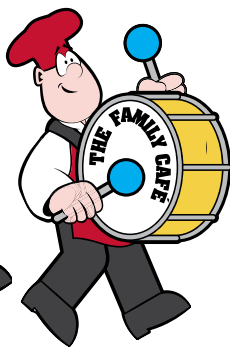
Manatee Spring II

3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Join an inclusive, hands-on adaptive martial arts session led by 4x ISKA World Champion James Sang Lee. Designed for all abilities, this class demonstrates how martial arts can build confidence and functional strength. James is a father of children with disabilities and has over seven years of experience teaching Dragonfly ASD Martial Arts to more than 70 autistic students at the Paragon School. In this session, expect step-by-step, hands-on drills, tips for building functional strength, and practical self-defense. Fun, casual, and immediately functional – bring curiosity and comfortable shoes.

James Sang Lee

Fortress Hill



THE
FAMILY
CAFÉ

The Fundamentals of Comfortable Wheelchair Sitting

Orlando N

3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

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 and those looking for the latest advancements will gain practical insights and tools to enhance the experience of wheelchair sitting for themselves or those they care for.

Tim Balz

Kalogon

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Tim@kalogon.com

Phelan-McDermid Syndrome Roundtable

Peacock Spring

3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Phelan-McDermid Syndrome is a rare genetic disorder involving chromosome 22. It can affect many critical functions in a person's body – from learning and communicating to eating and sleeping. Join us as we meet to provide support and awareness for persons and families impacted by Phelan-McDermid Syndrome. This will be an interactive session. Come connect with others, network and share experiences and resources. PMS – it's not what you think.

Vicki Nettelhorst

Marie Fauth



Financial Literacy Workshop

Plaza Intl Ballroom

3:30 pm to 4:30 pm



The Hands-On Banking Experience is Wells Fargo's community-based in-person financial literacy training program, designed to help participants by conducting a real-world exercise on employment, wages, and budgeting. Participants will make budget selections and have to balance their income and expenses. This iteration of Hands-On Banking will also incorporate aspects of financial literacy specific to The Family Cafe community, including managing benefits and limits.

Lawrence Bowdish

Wells Fargo

lawrence.bowdish@wellsfargo.com





Siblings, Your Mind Has Power! Let's Use It!

Rainbow Spring II
3:30 pm to 5:30 pm

What if you could learn simple tools to feel calmer, more focused, and more in control, anytime you need it?

This interactive session is designed especially for siblings (ages 13–17) and offers fun, hands-on ways to understand how your mind and body work together. You'll explore the power of your thoughts, learn how feelings show up in the body, and discover easy techniques to shift how you feel in real time. We'll experiment with muscle testing to see how the body responds to different thoughts, try simple breathwork to calm the nervous system, and learn tools like tapping (EFT) and sound to release stress and reset.

Whether things feel overwhelming, busy, or just a lot sometimes, these tools can help you feel stronger on the inside. Come curious, leave with your own set of "inner superpowers" you can use anytime, anywhere. (Please note: this session is scheduled to last two hours to allow for interactive activities.)

Paula Petry
paula@paulapetry.com

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

Red Carpet Experience, Plaza Intl Foyer
Gatorland Animal Show: Live Alligators and Crocodiles, Regency O - P
Performance by the Pyramid Players, Regency Rotunda

5:00 pm to 6:00 pm CONCURRENT SESSIONS



Parents Helping Parents

Barrel Spring I
5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

If you've ever learned something the hard way and thought, "I wish someone had told me this sooner," this is a session you don't want to miss. Parents helping parents is at the heart of meaningful advocacy – sharing what we've learned while navigating systems, services, and supports for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In this session, parent and caregiver difference-makers come together to share real-world insights, hard-earned lessons, and practical guidance to help you avoid common pitfalls and move forward with more confidence and clarity. Whether you are a parent, family member, or guardian, you don't have to figure this out alone – find a resource, make a connection, and walk away with takeaways you can use and an action plan to get started. You've already found Family Café – that's a powerful first step.

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Discovering My Son's Voice: A Father's Unexpected Journey Into Gestalt Language Processing

Bayhill 17

5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

What happens when your child can't speak the way the world expects, but still has so much to say? Join a heartfelt and eye-opening conversation as one father shares how discovering Gestalt Language Processing (GLP) gave his nonverbal autistic son a powerful new way to communicate. What began as confusion and frustration turned into breakthrough moments – ones that transformed not just his son's ability to express himself, but his entire path toward independence, learning, and connection. In this session, you'll: hear the real story behind one family's shift to GLP and scripting; learn how nontraditional communication can unlock expression for Gestalt language processors; take away practical insights and strategies that can support both professionals and parents; and be reminded that every child has a voice – we just have to learn how to hear it. Whether you're a parent, therapist, educator, or simply someone who cares, this presentation will offer an honest, hopeful, and deeply human look into how we can better understand and support the way some children truly learn to communicate.

Sergio Cruz

Starting with the End in Mind

Bayhill 18

5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Graduation and post-secondary success begin when students enter pre-kindergarten and continues throughout the 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, and many others, 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

sherry.conrad@rmtcdhh.org

Legal Rights and Responsibilities of Service Animals

Bayhill 19

5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

"Pawsitive" information regarding service animals! Attendees will learn about the legal rights and responsibilities of service animals while being able to ask questions. Join us and learn about the differences between the ESA, therapy, and working versus service animals. Gain a better understanding of who can have a service dog and where they can go. What basic laws apply to what area of life is something we all wonder about. Come join us for some "pawesome" information!

Carol Christopherson

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Let's Sleep On It

Bayhill 20

5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

The need for positioning does not end when we lay down. Individuals who need support to maintain alignment of the body in sitting and standing need it when laying down as well. Families may have heard the term “24 Hour Postural Care” but not been given the training and/or resources to truly understand what it means. Positioning equipment is used often during waking and active hours, but caregivers and medical professionals often don't understand the importance of supportive positioning when the body is resting and the fact that good alignment at night affects alignment and function during the day. Caregivers often have developed routines that “work” for them for the night that take into consideration things such as gastroesophageal reflux, seizures, breathing challenges, pain, sensory or thermal regulation, joint contractures and pressure injuries. With awareness of how important sleep routines are for everyone, this session aims to introduce a family friendly approach to nighttime postural care, while still managing other concerns. Helping caregivers understand the why, when, where and how to begin supported sleep positioning that can significantly improve their loved ones' comfort and alignment at night. Healthcare professionals also need to be educated and involved to work with families to obtain supportive sleep systems through insurances and individualize each client's supine positioning program successfully. Ultimately, providing this simple approach has been shown through decades of research to reduce expensive, painful, and often repeated orthopedic interventions for scoliosis, hip dysplasia and muscle contractures. Even one less surgery for a person with movement challenges is a win for everyone. Caregivers, medical and educational professionals, and individuals with movement challenges are invited to come and learn through video and hands-on examples of night time positioning equipment, then take their knowledge home and share with their teams. Let's sleep on that!

Mary Pengelley

Progressive Pediatric Therapy

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Building Better Brains: Strategies to Improve Executive Functioning in Students with Disabilities

Bayhill 21

5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

“Building Better Brains: Strategies to Improve Executive Functioning in Students with Disabilities” offers families practical strategies to help children with disabilities develop executive functioning skills like organization, time management, and self-regulation. Attendees will learn how to recognize common challenges, use simple tools and access trusted resources to support their child's growth at home. The session is designed to be accessible, interactive and actionable, giving families confidence and tools to foster independence and success in everyday life.

Bari Aronson

Broward County School District

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Secondary Transition and High School Graduation Requirements for Students

Bayhill 22

5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

This presentation will review the Florida high school graduation requirement pathways, including those for students with disabilities. Additionally, the requirements for secondary transition planning will be outlined.

Kim Brumage



ABCs of Special Needs Trusts and Guardian Advocacy

Bayhill 23

5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

This informative workshop is designed for parents, guardians, and advocates of individuals with special needs. Attorney Sarah AuMiller will discuss the importance of legal and estate planning for families with special needs. A family member with special needs creates an added layer of complexity to estate planning – the need for advanced trust planning and guardianship. In this workshop, you will learn the basics of special needs trusts – both first party and third party trusts, including why they are important for protecting government benefit eligibility and providing lifetime protection for vulnerable individuals. We will also explore both guardianship and guardian advocacy – when each is appropriate and why they are essential for the protection of your loved ones.

Sarah AuMiller

The Law Offices of Hoyt & Bryan

254 Plaza Drive

Oviedo, FL 32765

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sarah@hoytbryan.com

Using Person-Centered Thinking to Improve your Loved One's Services

Bayhill 24

5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Person-Centered Planning is at the heart of social services, and every service or support plan written is supposed to use this as the foundation. So what happens when your loved one still comes up short? Person-Centered Thinking is what Person-Centered Planning is based on, but it is not always implemented properly. This presentation will show you how you can identify and communicate unmet needs in a way that will force providers and agencies to re-examine their plan and lead to more specific and appropriate services. This is not a certification in Person-Centered Thinking, but a way to learn some of the basic concepts that you can then implement right away.

Shari MacFarlane

Easterseals Florida

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smacfarlane@esfl.org

Understanding the Matrix and How to Increase Step Up Funding

Bayhill 25

5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

This session will explain to parents, caregivers, private schools, therapists, and support providers what the Florida Matrix of Services is and how it directly correlates to a student's IEP. Because school districts do not explain how the Matrix works or how to ensure the IEP captures all areas of need, families are often left without the information required to secure an accurate Matrix score. Florida's Step Up for Students scholarship program can provide families of students with disabilities with up to \$30,000+ per year, yet most families, schools, and even districts do not realize that the Matrix of Services is what determines how much funding a child actually receives. In this session, nationally-recognized special education advocate Jamie Kirschner, Founder and CEO of Education Advocates of America, breaks down the Matrix in a clear, practical way and shows how IEP goals, service minutes, accommodations, and evaluations directly impact funding levels. Participants will learn what the five Matrix domains measure, the most common mistakes that lead to students being underrated and underfunded, and how to align documentation and IEP language to support a higher Matrix score. Families leave with a practical roadmap for ensuring their child's educational, therapeutic, and behavioral needs are fully recognized and funded under Florida law.

Jamie Kirschner

Education Advocates of America

Worthy: Letting Go of the Life You Imagined and Honoring the One You're Living

Bayhill 26

5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

When a child's life unfolds differently than expected, families are often forced to grieve imagined futures while navigating an uncertain new reality. This workshop explores the concept of worthiness – separate from grades, trophies, milestones, or social approval. Through reflection, lived experience, and practical re-framing tools, participants will learn how to release old measures of success, embrace the unknown, and anchor their parenting in the truth that their child is worthy exactly as they are. A disability diagnosis can quietly rewrite everything a family imagined – futures shaped by report cards, team photos, college plans, and cultural definitions of success. In the absence of those familiar markers, many parents find themselves questioning not just the future, but their own sense of meaning, identity, and worth. This workshop invites families to pause and examine the deeply embedded beliefs we carry about achievement, normalcy, and value. Together, we'll explore how to grieve the dreams that no longer fit, make peace with uncertainty, and consciously redefine what a meaningful, beautiful life can look like. Participants will leave with language, tools, and permission to see their child – and themselves – as worthy beyond performance, productivity, or comparison.

Amber Davis

ALLORA – For What Comes Next

The Rural Reality: Navigating Services, Support, and Employment When You Don't Live in a Big City

Bayhill 27

5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Families in Florida's rural communities often face unique challenges, including limited services, transportation barriers, and fewer employment or educational opportunities. This session provides practical, realistic solutions for finding support in areas where resources are scarce. Participants will learn how to build community partnerships, identify rural-friendly employment options, advocate effectively, and creatively overcome service gaps. Designed for families who feel overlooked or isolated, this workshop offers hope, tools, and strategies to help youth with disabilities thrive – no matter where they live.

Jacquanetta Willis

Prolific Learning Corp.

Bridging the Gap: Why Cognitive Functioning Matters More than IQ

Bayhill 28

5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

As a mother of a daughter with developmental disabilities, I spent years at IEP meetings being told what my child would not be able to do – always based on her IQ score. Yet as my daughter grew, so did her abilities. By the time she reached high school, the same professionals who once limited her potential were now asking how she managed to pass the math portion of the FCAT. My answer was simple: “With God all things are possible.”

What I learned on our journey is that an IQ number does not define a child’s capabilities, potential, or purpose. Instead of accepting limits, I focused on understanding my daughter’s cognitive functioning – where she was developmentally, how she learned best, and what supports could bridge the gap between her chronological age and her cognitive level.

This session will explore why cognitive functioning provides a more meaningful and practical foundation for supporting individuals with developmental disabilities. I’ll share our story, the strategies that helped my daughter succeed, and how families and professionals can shift from limiting labels to empowering approaches. Come discover how faith, intentional support, and a deeper understanding of cognitive functioning can open doors far beyond what any IQ score predicts.

Paula Whetro



School Liaisons are Here to Help - What is an IEP and How Do I Navigate the Process?

Bayhill 29

5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

School Liaisons play a vital role in supporting military families in a variety of ways, particularly within the Exceptional Family Members Program (EFMP). One key area of assistance is helping families navigate the complexities of local education systems. What happens when a military parent doesn’t know where to start with the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process? This seminar is designed to guide military parents through the IEP process from start to finish, beginning with the identification of students with disabilities, making requests for evaluation, determining eligibility for services, understanding evaluations, and managing timelines. Lastly, we’ll cover how to develop an Individualized Education Plan (when applicable). Since parents often don’t know what they don’t know, let the School Liaison be your guide through this important journey.

Erin Pickard
Naval Support Activity Base
Panama City

Mallory Gross
Tyndall Air Force Base

Dr. Venetia D. Waters
MacDill Air Force Base

Telling Your Story Your Way: Art as Self-Advocacy (No “Talent” Required)

Bayhill 30

5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

You don’t have to be an artist to share your story. This session demonstrates how storytelling and visual art can help communicate experiences, emotions, and identity in ways that feel safe and personal. Participants will explore imaginative approaches – using characters, symbols, and simple prompts – that foster authentic expression and celebrate each person’s unique voice. The hybrid format allows attendees to participate hands-on or simply observe and reflect, offering practical strategies and inspiration for individuals and families to use creativity as a meaningful tool for self-advocacy.

LeSha Martinez
Hidden Star Creations



Autism, Death, and Grief: Experiences from Those on the Spectrum

Bayhill 31
5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Many parents have a major fear of what will happen to their child after they are gone. The traumatic state that can occur is hard enough for neurotypical children, much less children on the spectrum. This presentation will focus on the experience of death of a loved one, especially a parent, from the viewpoint of people with ASD. The speakers lost parents and loved ones too soon and will describe the grieving processes, the difficulties faced, the supports they found helpful, and what advice they have for parents, siblings, relatives, and professionals. Strategies for helping prepare for the inevitable will be shared.

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Hurdle
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Jericka Knox
Thriving Successfully, Knox
Foundation, Hurdle

James Williams
Glenbrook North High
School Booster Club
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jmw820@comcast.net



Pathological Demand Avoidance in Children with ASD and ADHD

Bayhill 32
5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

This session will provide an overview of the most recent research on pathological demand avoidance/extreme task refusal/oppositional defiance disorder as a profile within developmental disability, including the most common root of these behaviors and their effect on behavioral and social development. We will discuss the impact on caregivers, children, and family dynamics, as well as specific skills and strategies tailored to the unique needs of these children that parents may develop to support their child effectively.

Erika Calderon
The Chicago School of Professional Psychology
5210 St Lucia Dr
Lakeland, FL 33812
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ecalderon1@ego.thechicagoschool.edu



Screen Time, Headphones, and the Health Consequences in Children and Adolescents

Bayhill 33
5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

This presentation highlights the pitfalls and consequences of too much screen time and headphone use, but also provides positive and restorative outcomes. Topics to be addressed include negative impacts of screen time, strategies for modifying negative impacts, sleep, the brain, and melatonin, dopamine's role: the feel-good chemical, positive impacts of screen time, how adults can model healthy online behavior, neurodivergent populations, and headphones and restorative practices.

Tina Beaulieu
Carelon

My Needs Network: Improving Access to Resources Through AI

Celebration 1

5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

This presentation showcases the development and beta testing results of an innovative AI-powered health literacy chatbot that emerged from eight years of community-based participatory research with families navigating complex disability and healthcare systems. My Needs Network's reinforced language model combines multiple AI platforms with human oversight and community feedback to deliver culturally appropriate health literacy education and intelligent resource navigation. Discover how My Needs Network's AI tool will support families in resources. My Needs Network's reinforced language model combines multiple AI platforms to provide personalized navigation through 200+ service categories, answering questions in plain language, identifying relevant local resources, and providing step-by-step instructions for accessing services. Unlike generic AI tools, this system is trained on community-specific content, connects directly to a database of 17,000+ vetted resources, and learns from real user experiences to improve recommendations over time. Attendees will learn how to use the tool, the framework for building the AI navigation system, and be introduced to our white-label deployment model that allows organizations to customize the AI for their communities. We will also discuss cost-effective implementation strategies using existing platforms, and provide a roadmap for moving from concept to live beta testing in under 12 months.

Mark Fafard

UF COM-J



Living on my Owen

Celebration 2

5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

In this session Zachary will tell you all about his experience living independently for the last 4 years! Zachary has had to take responsibility for all of his own needs. What supports does he receive? What happens if he forgets to do laundry? Is it all fun and parties? You'll have to come to this session to find out!

Zachary Owen



AAC from Start to Success: Navigating the Path to Communication in Florida

Celebration 3

5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

This session helps families, self-advocates, and professionals by looking at how Floridians acquire communication tools (AAC). Participants will learn about the many different assistive tech options that can support communication, who the key players are, how evaluations and funding options typically work, and what effective AAC use looks like in everyday life. Common pitfalls and misleading claims that can steer people away from effective AAC will also be discussed. FAAST's role will be explained, including demonstrations, device loans, and unbiased guidance to support informed communication decisions.

Kailey Medlock

Florida Alliance for Assistive Services & Technology (FAAST)

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kmedlock@faast.org





Estate Planning: Empower Your Family with Confidence

Celebration 5
5:00 pm to 6:00 pm



The seminar is designed for families with disabled children of all age groups, including newly diagnosed children with special needs, to those parents near and in retirement. The seminar will not only cover the estate planning basics, but also touch on funding strategies for supplemental needs trusts, along with emphasizing the importance of crafting a life care plan for their special someone.

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Greg Pienkosz
Wells Fargo Advisors
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Social Security Presents: Benefits for People with Disabilities

Celebration 6
5:00 pm to 6:00 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 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
Social Security Administration



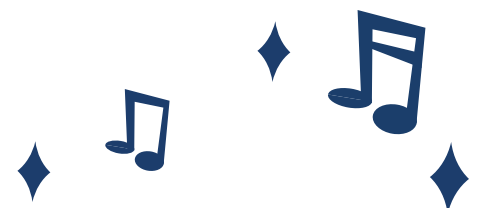
Early Childhood Part C to Part B Process

Celebration 7
5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

The presentation focuses on the process and procedures, as well as the rules and regulations, of moving from the 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 process.

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Orlando, FL 32816
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debbi.nicolosi@ucf.edu

LeNita Winkler



Supporting Students: Tips and Resources for Families

Celebration 8

5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Families play an important role in shaping student success. This session explores practical strategies for fostering strong family-school partnerships that support students in general education settings. Participants will learn how to create supportive home routines, encourage organizational skills, build relationships, and collaborate effectively with educators to ensure that students are successful. Through actionable tips and real-world examples, this session emphasizes how families and professionals work together for meaningful outcomes.

Kelly Claude

FIN



Restoration of Rights and Alternatives to Guardianship

Celebration 9

5:00 pm to 6:00 pm



This presentation will focus on the process of restoring one's rights after guardianship or guardian advocacy. Presenters will provide an overview of the process, instructions on how to get started, and information on the differences in restoration of rights from guardianship versus guardian advocacy. The presentation will also cover basic information about alternatives to guardianship, such as Designations of Healthcare Surrogate, Powers of Attorney, and Supported Decision-Making Agreements. Additionally, the presentation will explore how to use these alternatives, as well as social supports post-restoration, to ensure an individual's needs are met while preserving their rights and autonomy.

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Disability Rights Florida

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Gabriella Marquez

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Creating a Safe and Meaningful Home for Your Loved One

Celebration 10

5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Many families worry about where their loved one will live in the future and feel unsure about their options. In this session, families will learn about different home options – not just group homes – and how to think about housing in a more personal way. We'll explore what makes a good home, including safety, comfort, and belonging, and how support fits into daily life. Families will learn how to plan step by step instead of all at once. You'll leave with a clearer picture of housing possibilities and practical next steps you can start taking now.

Eric Goll

Eric Goll Coaching & Consulting



Guía tu futuro FPCTP: Oportunidades Reales para la Educación y el Empleo

Celebration 12

5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Esta atractiva e interactiva presentación presenta a estudiantes y familias los Grupos Profesionales y los Programas Integrales de Transición Postsecundaria de Florida (FPCTP) en todo el estado. Esto ayuda a alinear los intereses y habilidades de los estudiantes con caminos postsecundarios significativos que conducen al empleo. La sesión empodera a estudiantes y familias para explorar sus pasiones, comprender los programas disponibles y tomar medidas prácticas hacia una carrera profesional gratificante.

Los estudiantes terminarán con una comprensión más clara de sus intereses profesionales, conocimiento de las oportunidades del FPCTP y una hoja de ruta para seguir programas que se alineen con sus metas. Los educadores y las familias obtendrán herramientas para apoyar a los estudiantes en la toma de decisiones informadas sobre su futuro.

Objetivos de la sesión: Comprender los Grupos Profesionales y su relación con el mundo laboral; Aprender sobre los FPCTP y cómo apoyan a los estudiantes con discapacidad intelectual en su búsqueda de educación postsecundaria y Empleo; Descubrir herramientas y estrategias para identificar intereses personales, fortalezas y metas profesionales; Aprenda a explorar los FPCTP en Florida que se adaptan a los perfiles únicos de los estudiantes a través del sitio web de FCSUA; Obtenga un plan de acción personalizado para comenzar su camino hacia el empleo.

Jacqueline Marquez-Duprey

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Authentically You: Confident Interviewing for Neurodivergent Minds

Celebration 13

5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

“Authentically You: Confident Interviewing for Neurodivergent Minds” is an empowering and strengths-focused training designed to help neurodivergent individuals approach interviews with confidence, clarity, and authenticity. This session explores practical interviewing strategies through a neurodiversity-affirming lens – helping participants recognize their unique strengths, communicate their value, and navigate common interview challenges without masking who they are. This training encourages participants to show up proudly as themselves – because success in interviewing begins with authenticity.

Mary Muniz-Pellicer
YWCA South Florida, Inc.

Vanessa Muniz-Pellicer
Florida Youth Council



Ready Set Backpack: A Practical Emergency Plan for Neurodivergent Children and Adults

Celebration 14

5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Families of individuals with disabilities often ask the same question: What happens if I am not there? Emergencies take many forms. Hurricanes. Power outages. Evacuations. Unexpected hospital visits. Shelter stays. Sudden housing changes. In these moments, another adult may need to step in quickly. That adult may not know the individual’s sensory triggers, communication style, medical needs, or safety risks.

This session introduces the “Ready Set Backpack” framework, a family-driven, strength-based approach to emergency readiness. Participants will learn how to create a customized emergency plan and go bag that supports safety, dignity, and communication during high stress situations.

Kathy Rodriguez

Betsy Germain Evans



Voices That Matter: Reimagining Possibilities Through Family-Led Advocacy and Neurodiversity

Celebration 16

5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

“Voices That Matter: Reimagining Possibilities Through Family-Led Advocacy and Neurodiversity” delves into the influential role families can play in developing inclusive systems for those with autism and disabilities. Yazmin Castellano, a captivating speaker, is a mental health expert, a presenter at both state and national levels, and a mother to a child with autism and disabilities. Drawing from her work with the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities, culturally responsive projects like “Los Terneritos,” and collaboration with NADD, Yazmin emphasizes the significance of embracing neurodiversity, advocating for mental health, and promoting strengths-based inclusion in workplaces and communities. Through her media presence on Telemundo and Univision, she elevates diverse voices and advocates for inclusion. Participants will acquire advocacy tools and be motivated to transform the narrative from one of limitations to one of possibilities.

Yazmin Castellano



Autism Therapeutic Wellness Program

Coral Spring II
5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

The Autism Therapeutic Wellness Program integrates therapeutic strategies from speech-language pathology, occupational therapy, physical therapy, behavior analysis, and adaptive sports to support whole-person wellness. This session highlights how structured visual supports, sensory-regulated activities, and communication tools such as Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) can enhance participation, physical activity, and social engagement. Attendees will explore practical techniques and case examples that promote confidence and skill development for individuals with disabilities in non-traditional therapeutic environments. The session provides actionable resources for families and professionals to support individuals with autism in thriving in meaningful recreational and wellness settings.

Lisa Pugliese-LaCroix
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lisa@loveservingautism.org



Empowerment Through Martial Arts: Inclusive Self-Defense & Adaptive Training for Individuals with Disabilities

Manatee Spring II
5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

This interactive breakout will equip individuals with disabilities, their families, and service-providers with foundational self-defense tools tailored for inclusive settings. Participants will explore adaptive movement principles, reaction training, breathing and stability techniques, and how to incorporate these into everyday routines. Attendees will leave with practical drills and a resource to continue to train in our inclusive martial arts programs. The session emphasizes empowerment, safety, and independence in a respectful, inclusive environment.

Master G
A Charity Empowered to Save Souls



Adaptive Chair or Wheelchair Zumba

Orlando N
5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Physical activity does not need to be strenuous to offer significant health benefits. Engaging in movement set to Rock n Roll music through the Zumba formula provides an accessible introduction to exercise. Individuals with disabilities and their caregivers may sometimes avoid participating in physical activity due to concerns about intensity or maintaining pace with others; however, this class is specifically designed for exercise while seated in a chair or wheelchair. Zumba is an international dance fitness program suitable for all ages and abilities, featuring easy-to-follow routines. With its enjoyable approach, Zumba encourages participants to focus on movement and well-being in an inclusive and supportive environment.

Paula Burns
Burns Dance & Fitness

Meet the Director: APD Overview & Vision

Plaza Intl Ballroom

5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Join APD Director Bob Asztalos for an overview of the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, including the services we provide, who we serve, and how we support individuals and families across Florida. Director Asztalos will also share key priorities, upcoming initiatives, and his vision for strengthening partnerships and expanding opportunities statewide.

Robert Asztalos

Agency for Persons with Disabilities

6:00 pm to 6:30 pm

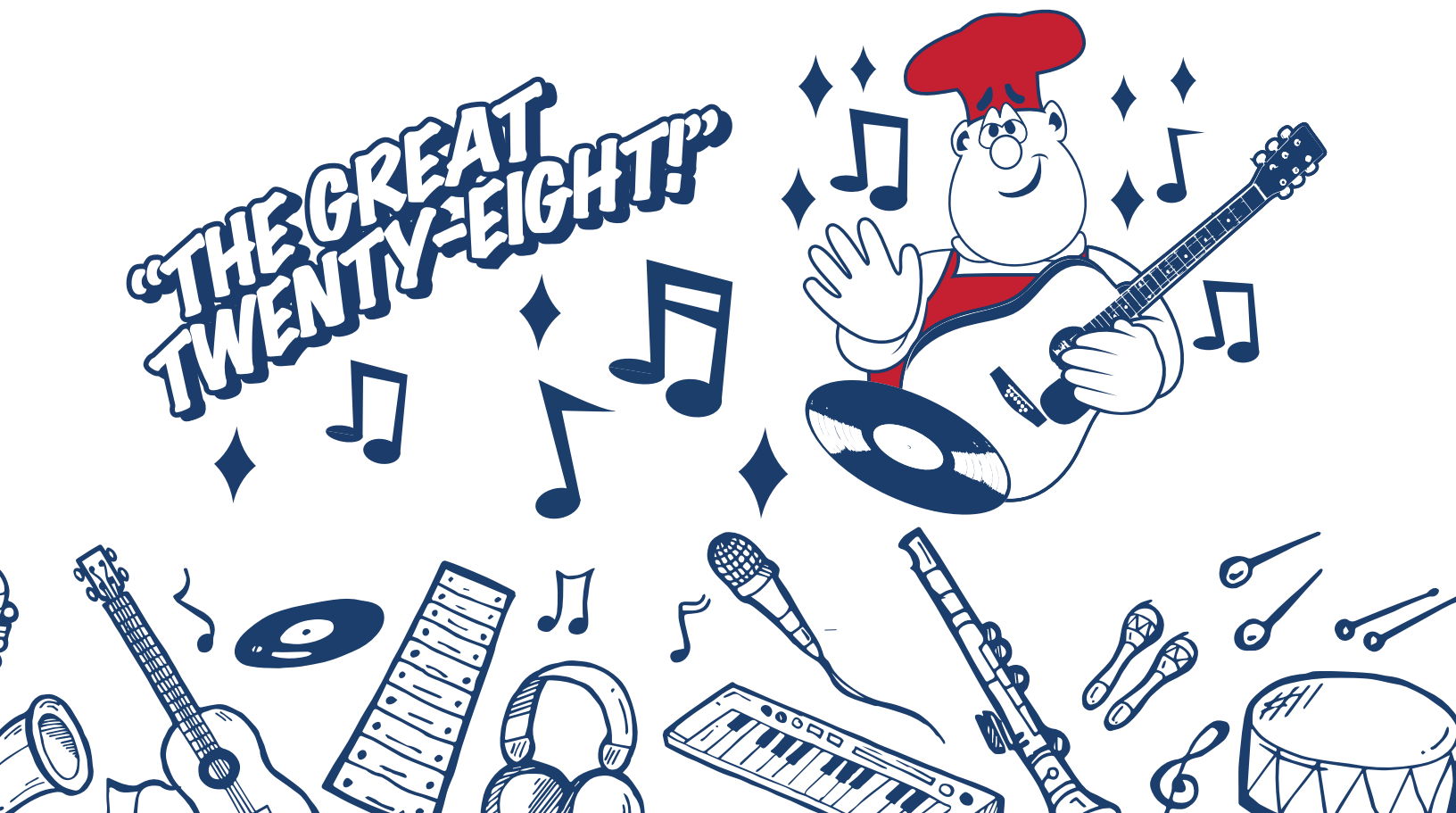
6:30 pm to 7:00 pm

7:00 pm to 8:30 pm

Performance by Milosz Gasior, Regency Rotunda

Performance by St. John & Friends, Plaza Intl Foyer

Annual Summit on Disabilities, Plaza Intl Ballroom





FRIDAY

JUNE 12, 2026

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

The 28th Annual Summit on Disabilities



BILL GALVANO

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.

Beginning with The 1st Annual Family Café nearly three decades ago, creating a space where attendees can connect with the elected officials and policymakers whose actions profoundly impact daily life for Floridians with disabilities and their families has been a cornerstone of The Annual Family Café. We're excited to continue the tradition here in 2026!

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. It also provides an occasion to remember how important it is for people with disabilities to engage in our representative democracy, and make their voices heard both at the ballot box and at the Capitol.

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 28th Annual Summit on Disabilities!

The 28th 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.



THE FAMILY CAFÉ

"THE GREAT TWENTY-EIGHT!"



SATURDAY

JUNE 13, 2026

12:30 pm to 2:30 pm
Keynote Address
Plaza International Ballroom

Patrice: The Movie

The Family Café invites you to join us for a screening of *Patrice: The Movie* followed by a Panel Discussion with the Filmmakers and Cast!

Patrice has finally found the love of her life, Garry, who is also disabled. They want nothing more than to get married, but if they do - or even if they just move in together - the government benefits they need to survive would be cut. Despite the scrutiny they're under, they decide to plan a commitment ceremony that could risk their entire future.



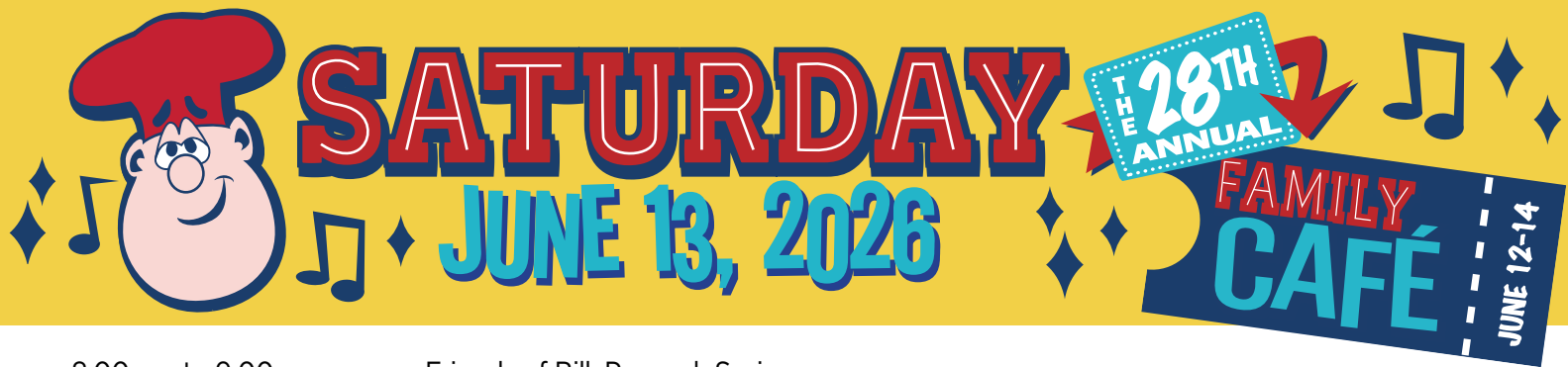
PATRICE



***Patrice: The Movie* won the Emmy Award for “Exceptional Merit in Documentary Filmmaking”**

... and it also won the Humanitas Prize, the Cinema Eye Honor “Unforgettable Award,” the “All Inclusion Award” at the DOK Fest Munich, and the “Audience Award” at the Camden Film Festival. The film made its world premiere at the Toronto Film Festival. It is available on Hulu where it became one of the top 25 “Most Liked” documentaries on the platform.





8:00 am to 9:00 am

Friends of Bill, Peacock Spring

8:00 am to 9:00 am

Everyone Can Zumba!, Regency Rotunda

8:00 am to 5:00 pm

Registration Open, Registration Desk

8:00 am to 8:00 pm

Club Cafe, Orlando L

9:00 am to 10:00 am

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

9:00 am to 4:00 pm

Disability History Media Room, Coral Spring I

9:00 am to 5:00 pm

Book Fair, Regency Q

9:00 am to 6:00 pm

The Florida Disability History Timeline, Upper Springs Foyer

9:00 am to 6:00 pm

SportsAbility Sampler, Regency O - P

9:00 am to 6:00 pm

ABLE United Enrollment Hub, Blue Spring II

9:00 am to 6:00 pm

Cafe Connections, Columbia 35/36

9:00 am to 6:00 pm

The Molina Healthcare Family Hub, Rainbow Spring I

9:00 am to 6:00 pm

PS/Rtl Technology and Learning Connections Hands-On Tech Expo, Manatee Spring I

9:00 am to 6:00 pm

Exhibit Hall, Regency Ballroom

9:30 am to 4:00 pm

Henry's Friendly Sensory Farm, Orlando M

10:00 am to 10:30 am

Red Carpet Experience, Plaza Intl Foyer

10:00 am to 10:30 am

Performance by Radiant Voices, Regency Rotunda

10:00 am to 3:00 pm

Adapted Art Exploration, Orlando N

10:00 am to 5:00 pm

Florida Community Care Discovery Hub, Blue Spring I

10:00 am to 6:00 pm

Pawesome Spot, Columbia 37

10:30 am to 11:30 am

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

11:30 am to 12:00 pm

Gatorland Animal Show: Live Alligators and Crocodiles, Regency O - P

11:30 am to 12:00 pm

Performance by the Pyramid Players, Regency Rotunda

12:00 pm to 12:30 pm

Performance by Katerina Rancano, Plaza Intl Foyer

12:00 pm to 12:30 pm

Performance by Joy Street, Regency Bridge

12:30 pm to 2:30 pm

Saturday Keynote - Patrice: The Movie, Plaza Intl Ballroom

2:30 pm to 3:00 pm

Red Carpet Experience, Plaza Intl Foyer

2:30 pm to 3:00 pm

Performance by Wings to Fly Dance Company, Regency Rotunda

3:00 pm to 4:00 pm

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

4:00 pm to 4:30 pm

Red Carpet Experience, Plaza Intl Foyer

4:00 pm to 4:30 pm

Performance by the Pyramid Players, Regency Rotunda

4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

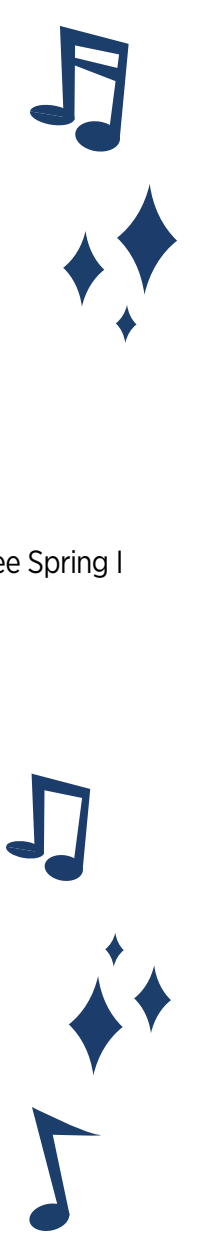
CONCURRENT SESSIONS

5:30 pm to 6:00 pm

Performance by the Pyramid Players, Regency Rotunda

7:00 pm to 10:00 pm

Saturday Night Dance, Plaza Intl Ballroom





9:00 am to 10:00 am CONCURRENT SESSIONS



Involving Dads: How to Encourage and Support Involvement by Dads

Bayhill 17

9:00 am to 10:00 am

This workshop is designed to help moms, significant others, families, and professionals understand the issues that may impact involvement by fathers, to help moms, families, significant others, and professionals 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 / Hard of Hearing

207 San Marco Avenue

Saint Augustine, FL 32084

(904) 827-2731

mark.keith@rmtcdhh.org

Familias y Profesionales Unidos

Bayhill 18

9:00 am to 10:00 am

El navegar nuestros sistemas de apoyo y servicios puede ser muy difícil, especialmente si no hablas inglés. La Fundación del Síndrome CHARGE ha avanzado en este aspecto mediante varias estrategias que han ayudado a nuestras familias a través de la distancia. En esta session, vamos a pensar en estrategias que podemos poner in accion para unir a profesionales y familias para poder compartir recursos y hacer una red de apoyo. ¡Ya es hora de tomar acción y compartir!

Lourdes Quintana Baez

CHARGE Syndrome Foundation

318 Half Day Rd #305

Buffalo Grove, IL 60089

(800) 442-7604

lourdes@chargesyndrome.org

Sign Language Myth-Busting: The Benefits of ASL for ALL Children

Bayhill 19

9:00 am to 10:00 am

Break through the myths and discover the ease and benefits of using sign language to stimulate and enhance communication in children of all ages and abilities. Whether or not your child can hear, he or she can benefit from sign language! Learn some signs you can use right away. You don't need to have any prior knowledge of sign to begin to enjoy its benefits. Come play and sign with us!

Lisa Curley

Gracious Youth, Inc

The Animation Connection: Utilizing Anime and Disney Films To Share Disability Awareness

Bayhill 20

9:00 am to 10:00 am

Many people with disabilities enjoy anime and Disney films, and belong to various Disney and anime fan communities. Listen to a group of disabled fans of anime and Disney films discuss how they 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.

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Glenbrook North High School
Booster Club
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(224) 628-6629
jmw820@comcast.net

Hailey Buxton
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kbuxton@tampabayrr.com

Danica Lane
Dunedin, FL 34698
(727) 244-4340
lorettalane@me.com

Combating Human Trafficking: Equipping Individuals & Activating Community

Bayhill 21

9:00 am to 10:00 am

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.

Janette Canas
janette.canas@apdcares.org

Jennifer Maloney
Jennifer.Maloney@apdcares.org

Behavior Supports at Home and School: What Families Should Expect

Bayhill 22

9:00 am to 10:00 am

Florida law requires schools to address challenging behavior through positive, proactive supports, not punishment alone. This session helps families understand what schools are legally required to do when behavior interferes with learning and what effective behavior supports should look like at school and at home.

Families will learn when Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBAs) and Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs) are required, what protections exist related to discipline, and the legal limits on restraint and seclusion. Through real-life examples, the session highlights how schools and families can work together to teach communication, self-regulation, and coping skills.

Participants will leave with a clear understanding of their rights, practical expectations, and information about free Florida resources available to support families and children.

Chelsea Strickland

Mathematics for Life

Bayhill 23

9:00 am to 10:00 am

Mathematics for life means helping children use math as a practical tool to understand their world. It is less about worksheets and more about building real-life thinking skills through play, daily routines, and exploration. These skills support success in school and everyday life. This session will provide activities for home, to include how adults can support math learning naturally. I have been an educator for twenty-five years, with twenty of those years being a professional learning specialist for administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, and families.

Michelle Surman
FDLRS/Springs

Carol Hall
FDLRS/ Springs



Nothing About Us Without Our Voices: A Beginner's Guide to Podcasting for the Disability Community

Bayhill 24

9:00 am to 10:00 am



Disabled voices are still underrepresented in podcasting, even though audio storytelling can be an accessible way to share lived experience. In this beginner-friendly session, people with disabilities, family members, and allies will learn how to start recording stories and interviews using simple tools they may already have, like a smartphone. We will cover basic setup, planning a short episode, recording tips for clearer sound, and safer sharing choices. Participants will leave with a step-by-step starter checklist, sample questions for interviews, and a list of free or low-cost tools.

Jodi Beckstine
Disability Rights Florida

Keith Casebonne
Disability Rights Florida

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

Bayhill 25

9:00 am to 10:00 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
P.O. Box 54429
Jacksonville, FL 32245
(877) 735-7837
pnelson@sufs.org



Special Needs Families and Post-Secondary Success

Bayhill 26

9:00 am to 10:00 am

Families will learn how to move from overwhelmed to confident as they navigate middle and high school homeschooling for disabled students and those with diverse learning needs. This session will offer practical tools for personalized assessment, strengths-based planning, goal-setting, and transition pathways (college, career, entrepreneurship, or military). Participants will receive faith-friendly, family-centered strategies they can adapt to their own values, resources, and each student's unique profile. As the owner of Anchored Approach LLC, a holistic, faith-based homeschool consulting practice, we support Florida families of disabled and neurodivergent students in grades 6-12. Professional expertise includes personalized assessments, strengths-focused coaching, and tailored education and transition planning for diverse post-secondary paths. With experience guiding families from "frazzled to freedom," we equip students and caregivers to confidently design clear, realistic, and values-aligned learning plans.

Aaron Morrison
Anchored Approach LLC

Ashley Morrison

Overcoming Obstacles, Whatever It Takes

Bayhill 27

9:00 am to 10:00 am

This session will feature my story of overcoming a cerebral palsy diagnosis and all of the "nevers" put on me. I share how cerebral palsy still affects me to this day, but how I was still able to fight for my goals, becoming the most successful person to ever do my sport.

Vance Walker

Benefits Soup

Bayhill 28

9:00 am to 10:00 am

Navigating disability-related benefits can be confusing. You may receive SSI, SSDI, Medicaid, Medicare, HCBS waivers, Vocational Rehabilitation, HUD assistance, or other state and federal programs. Each has its own rules and eligibility requirements, and when you receive multiple benefits, those rules can overlap or conflict. What do you need to follow to stay eligible for the supports you rely on? How does one program affect another? Join us for a straightforward look at how these benefits interact and what to watch for so you can maintain eligibility across programs.

Charlotte Temple
DST



EFMP Essentials: Connecting Families to Care and Resources

Bayhill 29

9:00 am to 10:00 am

This session will provide EFMP families an overview of the comprehensive and coordinated community supports for military and/or those who have dependents with special needs. EFMP-FS takes an all-inclusive approach to coordinate military and civilian community, educational, medical, housing, grants, and personnel services to help better support Service Members (SM) and their families with exceptional needs.

Angela O'Campo

Ta'Nashea McLeod



The Arts in Pre-K and Beyond!

Bayhill 30

9:00 am to 10:00 am

Early art education has been shown to promote skill and knowledge acquisition in young children. Through art, young children build important skills like recognizing shapes, colors, letters, numbers, emotions, and patterns, while also strengthening fine and gross motor skills, exploring their senses, and learning how to interact positively with others. Art also encourages creativity, confidence, and safe risk-taking.

In this session, we will share examples of literacy-based thematic art activities used with young children in community settings such as libraries, Pre-K classrooms, and early learning programs, and highlight how children with disabilities enthusiastically engage with and enjoy the arts. During the hands-on activities, parents will learn simple, flexible ways to adapt art activities at home so children of all ages and ability levels can participate, experiment, and have fun together.

Sassafrass Mittleman

Arts4All Florida

4202 E. Fowler Ave, EDU 105

Tampa, FL 33620

(850) 459-1374

sassafrass@usf.edu



Grieving the Diagnosis

Bayhill 31

9:00 am to 10:00 am

Receiving an autism or special needs diagnosis for a child is life-altering. It comes with love, fierce advocacy, and hope – but it also brings grief, confusion, guilt, fear, and loss of the future a parent once imagined. This session gently walks families through the emotional journey that follows a diagnosis, acknowledging the very real and valid grief while offering space for healing, community, and renewed strength. We'll explore the stages of grief as they uniquely apply to caregivers, discuss how to process overwhelming emotions in healthy ways, and share practical tools for resilience, support, and finding purpose again. Parents will leave feeling seen, grounded, and empowered to move forward with hope. Perfect for parents, caregivers, extended family, ministry leaders, educators, and anyone supporting families after diagnosis. Attendees will come away with emotional validation, realistic coping strategies, language to explain this experience to others, and renewed confidence for the road ahead.

Jeanetta Bryant

Abilities Workshop, Inc

377 Maitland Ave #2007

Altamonte Springs, FL 32701

(407) 951-6117

Jeanetta@abilitiesworkshop.com





Dual Diagnosis Discussion – The Intersection of Developmental Disabilities and Mental Health

Bayhill 32

9:00 am to 10:00 am



This presentation will be focused on individuals who are dually diagnosed with I/DD and mental health conditions. It will explore the great need for services for this increasingly common area of dual diagnosis. We will review the current services and treatments available in Florida and will explore promising treatment and service models used in other states.

Patrick Heidemann

Disability Rights Florida

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Tallahassee, FL 32308

(850) 617-9757

PatrickH@disabilityrightsflorida.org



Keeping Cool When Emotions Run Hot: Emotional Regulation for Neurodivergent Minds

Bayhill 33

9:00 am to 10:00 am

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. Dr. Christina Gonzalez is a Licensed Mental Health Counselor with a doctorate degree in Counseling Psychology who specializes in ADHD, Autism, Anxiety, Trauma, and other conditions that impact emotional regulation. She has worked with a variety of clients from different backgrounds over the past 20 years. She also has ADHD and Anxiety herself. Daniel Gonzalez is an adult with cerebral palsy, sensory integration disorder, developmental disabilities, anxiety, and ADHD and a history of significant levels of emotional dysregulations. They share their lived and learned experiences – personal and professional – in this presentation.

Christina Gonzalez

Daniel Gonzalez



Sydney's Story: The Gift, the Guests, and Getting Them Off the Couch (Because Anxiety Doesn't Get to Run the House)

Celebration 1

9:00 am to 10:00 am

This presentation blends honesty, humor, and creativity to explore living with anxiety and depression through the lens of autism and OCD. Through storytelling, lighthearted moments, and the use of art as expression, the presenter shares practical strategies she uses to recognize emotional cues, regulate anxiety, and navigate hard days. Participants are invited to laugh, reflect, and engage in simple, creative practices that make coping skills feel human and doable.

Sydney Lanier



The Arts Get Accessible: A Fun Dive into Disability and Expression

Celebration 2

9:00 am to 10:00 am

The arts and people with disabilities have always gone hand-in-hand, creativity is for EVERYONE. Art opens fun, meaningful ways to share stories, emotions, and ideas – no fancy words required. From painting and music to theater and dance, creative spaces give people with disabilities the chance to shine, connect, and be seen for who they are. Along the way, the arts have also helped flip the script on stereotypes and change how society thinks about disability. Come along as we explore the history of art and disability and celebrate how inclusivity and accessible creative spaces make imagination soar.

Vanessa Muniz-Pellicer
Florida Youth Council



Creating an Inclusive Home: Exploring Diverse Housing Options to Support Independence for Individuals with Disabilities

Celebration 3

9:00 am to 10:00 am

This presentation will explore the critical need for and various solutions regarding adaptive housing for individuals with disabilities. Amanda and her family will share their personal, inspirational journey creating a specialized, adjacent tiny home, discussing the design challenges, specific solutions (assistive technology, soundproofing, adaptive furniture), and the profound positive impact on Amanda's independence. The goal is to equip Amanda with skills for daily living, increase her self-sufficiency, and further her workforce readiness. Chantai Snellgrove will then broaden the discussion, addressing the overarching challenges of supporting individuals with disabilities and creating/finding other viable living space options, offering practical guidance and resources for families exploring diverse housing paths.

Chantai Snellgrove

Amanda Lieberman



Fundraising for Families and Non-Profits

Celebration 4

9:00 am to 10:00 am

The session is aimed at empowering families, advocates, and nonprofit leaders with practical strategies to raise funds and support their missions. Jim Sayih is a parent who's son, 33-years-old, is diagnosed with cerebral palsy. He draws on his experience leading impactful initiatives at Special Compass where he has been their Executive Director for 10 years. Jim presents actionable fundraising ideas that can help individuals and organizations create lasting community impact.

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Michael Sayih
Special Compass
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Pembroke Pines, FL 33028
(305) 297-5328
info@specialcompass.org



**Special Needs Trust (SNT) Services:
Serving Clients Living with A Disability**



Celebration 5
9:00 am to 10:00 am

This session will help attendees to understand the demand and identify the need for Special Needs Trusts, explore key features of a Special Needs Trust and types of SNTs, discuss considerations for a drafting a flexible SNT, and cover items potentially covered by an SNT with a range of examples and scenarios.

Myrian Garrett
Wells Fargo Bank
P O BOX 41629
Austin, TX 78704
(737) 218-5142
Myrian.Garrett@WellsFargo.com

Essential Legal Planning for Special Needs Families

Celebration 6
9:00 am to 10:00 am

Estate planning can be overwhelming, particularly when we add a family member with special needs. We will provide an overview to help prepare for that first meeting with a lawyer. The more prepared you are for the meeting, the more productive the meeting. We will give attendees a basic understanding of public benefits, including Social Security and Medicaid, estate planning tools such as special needs trusts and advance directives, and cover guardianship for individuals with special needs.

Travis Finchum
Special Needs Lawyers, PA
901 Chestnut Street
Clearwater, FL 33756
(727) 443-7898
Travis@specialneedslawyers.com



Unlocking the Mystery of Cortical/Cerebral Visual Impairment (CVI): A Guide for Parents

Celebration 7
9:00 am to 10:00 am

Cortical/Cerebral Visual Impairment (CVI) is now the leading cause of vision loss in children. Yet, many may not fully understand how CVI affects a child's ability to see and learn. This session is designed especially for families and caregivers who want to better understand this unique type of visual impairment. You'll learn what CVI is, how it's assessed in a school setting, and what it means for your child's education. Most importantly, you'll leave with practical tools, strategies, and resources to help support your child's learning and development – at home and in school.

Cheri Hart
FIMC-VI
4716 Montgomery Ave
Tampa, FL 33616
(813) 837-7826
chart@fimcvi.org

Adaptive Fashion for Real Life: How Clothing Can Empower People with Disabilities

Celebration 8

9:00 am to 10:00 am

In this interactive session, designer and founder of Lady Fines Adaptive Fashion, Lady Fines, will guide attendees through the world of adaptive apparel and why thoughtful design matters for people with disabilities. This presentation will include a visual PowerPoint that explains the needs, challenges, and daily barriers that many individuals face when dressing, along with solutions that adaptive fashion can provide.

Lady will walk the audience through real examples of adaptive clothing, including magnetic closures, accessible tracksuits, hearing aid covers, wheelchair friendly accessories, and more. Attendees will have the chance to see and touch sample garments while learning how small design choices can create big improvements in comfort, independence, and personal confidence.

This session is ideal for families, caregivers, educators, disability advocates, and anyone interested in inclusive design. Participants will leave with a better understanding of adaptive fashion, how it supports diverse bodies, and how the clothing industry can create a more accessible future for everyone.

Lady Fines

Lady Fines Adaptive Fashion



Restoration of Rights and Alternatives to Guardianship

Celebration 9

9:00 am to 10:00 am



This presentation will focus on the process of restoring one's rights after guardianship or guardian advocacy. Presenters will provide an overview of the process, instructions on how to get started, and information on the differences in restoration of rights from guardianship versus guardian advocacy. The presentation will also cover basic information about alternatives to guardianship, such as Designations of Healthcare Surrogate, Powers of Attorney, and Supported Decision-Making Agreements. Additionally, the presentation will explore how to use these alternatives, as well as social supports post-restoration, to ensure an individual's needs are met while preserving their rights and autonomy.

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Gabriella Marquez
Disability Rights Florida
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(850) 617-9744
gabriellam@disabilityrightsflorida.org



Staying Safe: Protecting People with Disabilities from Scams and Identity Theft

Celebration 10

9:00 am to 10:00 am

Scammers often target vulnerable communities, and people with disabilities are in the top three targeted populations, facing unique risks. This session will share practical tips to recognize scams, safeguard personal information, and respond to identity theft. Learn how to stay informed, protect your finances, and access support if fraud occurs.

Becky MacDicken
National Disability Institute
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Washin, DC 20006
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bmacdicken@ndi-inc.org



Soft Skills – What Makes or Breaks Successful Employment

Celebration 12

9:00 am to 10:00 am

This session will focus on the importance of soft skills for adults with disabilities to succeed in competitive, integrated employment. It will highlight how these skills complement technical abilities and improve workplace readiness.

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Christine Nammour
MacDonald Training Center
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CNammour@MacDonaldCenter.org



Playing for More Than Applause: Recognizing Real Skills in Creative and Community Work

Celebration 13

9:00 am to 10:00 am

This session highlights how a disabled artist can serve the community while exploring how traditional employment models may not fully capture all forms of skilled work. I will share how my son, Milosz – a minimally verbal autistic pianist – uses his musical skills in service at Moffitt Cancer Center and Johns Hopkins Hospital, and through volunteer performances for PARC Center for Disabilities, Night to Shine, and other community events. Milosz has also performed for four consecutive years at Tampa International Airport and Florida Botanical Gardens, and holds paid work at DeLukas Restaurant. His journey invites discussion about recognizing skilled work, meaningful contribution, and how vocational pathways can evolve to align with individual strengths.

Bozena Gasior



Autism & The Law – How To Prepare for Law Enforcement Contact & Current Trends

Celebration 14

9:00 am to 10:00 am

“My child on the autism spectrum will never come into contact with law enforcement officers.” That is the statement we hear often, and is probably the most incorrect one ever made. The fact is that you never know what is going to cause law enforcement officer contact with an individual on the autism spectrum. Therefore, you must prepare your child/teen/adult for the eventual contact. This session will focus on how best to prepare for law enforcement contact, give strategies and supports, offer insight to current trends, and share how to make them as safe as possible.

Donna Lorman
Autism Society of Greater Orlando
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Orlando, FL 32809
(407) 855-0235
dlorman@asgo.org

Hector Gonzalez
Bal Harbour Police Department
655 96th Street
Surfside, FL 33154
(305) 866-5000
hgonzalez@balharbourfl.gov



Self-Advocacy Skills Through Storytelling

Celebration 15

9:00 am to 10:00 am

We explore how storytelling techniques can make self-advocacy clearer, calmer, and more effective in everyday interactions like requesting accommodations or responding to difficulties. Participants will learn how to shape personal experiences into clear narratives that highlight facts, reduce misunderstandings, and build credibility. Learn how structure, word choice, and tone influence how others respond, plus practical tools like boundary statements and reframing techniques. Attendees will leave with simple resources and strategies to help them communicate their needs with confidence, clarity, and impact.

Mary Cannon
Kogut & Cannon
300 N New York Ave #832
Winter Park, FL 32790
(407) 924-8567
mhecannon@gmail.com



Pediatric Feeding Therapy: The OT Perspective

Celebration 16

9:00 am to 10:00 am

In 2021, Pediatric Feeding Disorder (PFD) was formally added to the International Classification of Diseases, marking a pivotal shift in how we recognize and treat feeding challenges. With 1 in every 37 children under the age of five currently diagnosed with PFD, the need for evidence-based, holistic intervention has never been more urgent. This session explores the critical role of Occupational Therapy in managing the four domains of PFD: medical, nutrition, feeding skills, and psychosocial. Attendees will learn how OTs bridge the gap between clinical mechanics (swallowing and oral motor skills) and the sensory-rich environment of the family dinner table. We will dive into specialized interventions, from adaptive equipment to sensory processing strategies, and highlight why the “interprofessional team” isn’t complete without the most important member: the caretaker. Objectives will include defining the four domains of PFD and other related feeding difficulties, recognizing the risks of untreated feeding disorders (e.g., tube dependency and developmental delays), identifying specific OT interventions, including sensory-based strategies and adaptive feeding equipment, and understanding the “Caretaker-Coaching” model: how OTs empower parents to read infant/child cues and improve the mealtime dynamic.

Tierra Momplaisir
3 Step Services LLC



Lightsabers for Fun and Fitness with 4X ISKA World Champion James Sang Lee

Manatee Spring II

9:00 am to 10:00 am

Join James Sang Lee, a 4x ISKA World Martial Arts Champion and film and TV fight choreographer, for a fun and energetic session using lightsabers to encourage movement and promote fitness. Designed for all levels, this class features step-by-step lightsaber instruction and hands-on drills that blend fun with functional movement. Casual, engaging, and accessible – no Force powers required.

James Sang Lee
Fortress Hill

22q Roundtable

Peacock Spring

9:00 am to 10:00 am

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

Kristina Buchholz
Florida Conquers 22q



The Power of the Disability Vote

Plaza Intl Ballroom

9:00 am to 10:00 am

In this presentation, President and CEO Maria Town will discuss the many ways that the disability community is an important political constituency with the power to transform the future of our nation.

Maria Town
American Association of People with Disabilities

9:30 am to 4:00 pm

10:00 am to 10:30 am

10:00 am to 10:30 am

10:00 am to 3:00 pm

10:00 am to 6:00 pm

Henry's Friendly Sensory Farm, Orlando M

Red Carpet Experience, Plaza Intl Foyer

Performance by Radiant Voices, Regency Rotunda

Adapted Art Exploration, Orlando N

Pawesome Spot, Columbia 37

10:30 am to 11:30 am CONCURRENT SESSIONS



Belief, Grit, & A Plan: Helping Our Young Adults Thrive

Bayhill 17

10:30 am to 11:30 am

"Mattie & Me" is a story of challenges met with belief – and a refusal to be deterred. As a single dad raising a young adult with Down syndrome, I've learned that progress begins when we truly believe our children are capable of anything. From there, the work becomes building a plan. This session shares the real obstacles we faced, the moments of doubt, and the mindset shifts and practical tools that helped us keep moving forward. Parents – especially dads and single caregivers – will leave inspired, encouraged, and equipped with actionable ideas to help their young adults build confidence, purpose, and possibility at The Family Café.

Rich Mistkowski
Mattie & Me
4251 SE 200th Ave
Morrison, FL 32668
(908) 507-2151
richmistkowski@gmail.com

Secondary Transition Basics 101: Seize the Day to Ensure Your Youth is Ready for a Fulfilling Adult Life

Bayhill 18

10:30 am to 11:30 am

The purpose of this training is to help families and students with disabilities understand the secondary transition process and how to actively and effectively participate in it. Participants in this training will comprehend how the transition components in the individual educational plan (IEP) prepare the student for life after high school; recognize the importance of self-advocacy and self-determination needed to achieve the student's post-secondary goals; and identify the resources that support the family and the student during transition planning.

Nicole Klees

Project 10: Transition Education Network

Lisa Friedman-Chavez

Service Animals and Emotional Support Animals Are The Same Thing – Right?

Bayhill 19

10:30 am to 11:30 am

Ever walked into a business with your assistance animal and heard, “Sorry, no pets allowed” – even after explaining it's not a pet? You're not alone. Misunderstandings about service animals and emotional support animals create unnecessary barriers every day, and these actions could actually be discriminatory! In this lively session, we'll bust myths, share real-world examples, and give you the tools to ensure businesses and individuals know the facts. Come ready to learn, engage, and help create spaces where everyone belongs!

Dante Bonner

Florida Commission on Human Relations

4075 Esplanade Way, Room 110

Tallahassee, FL 32399

(850) 907-6822

Dante.Bonner@fchr.myflorida.com

Successful Transitions: Supporting Children Through Sensory-Informed Strategies

Bayhill 20

10:30 am to 11:30 am

Transitions can be difficult for many children, especially those experiencing developmental, behavioral, emotional, or sensory challenges. This interactive session will provide caregivers and professionals with practical, sensory-informed strategies to support smoother transitions at home, school, and in the community. Participants will learn how to use visual supports, movement, music, play, and calming tools to reduce stress and increase cooperation during routines such as mealtimes, bath time, bedtime, and outings. Resources will be shared to help adapt strategies for each child's unique needs, strengths, and developmental stage.

Janine Stewart

Easterseals Florida, Inc

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jstewart@esfl.org

**Life'sPilot: Real Time Support for Autism Caregivers—
In the Palm of Your Hand**



Bayhill 21

10:30 am to 11:30 am

This session introduces Life'sPilot, an AI-powered platform designed to support families, caregivers, and professionals caring for autistic and neurodivergent individuals. Attendees will learn how Life'sPilot helps users prepare for challenging moments, problem-solve in real time, and debrief after everyday situations at home, school, in the community, and across clinical settings. The session will also share how the platform can strengthen caregiver confidence, improve communication across the care circle, and make support more accessible between appointments.

Mary Partin
Life's Pilot
mary@lifespilot.com

Blanca Diaz
Life's Pilot

Section 504 Overview

Bayhill 22

10:30 am to 11:30 am

This session will provide an overview of Section 504 accommodation plans, explaining their purpose, eligibility criteria, and the procedures for identification, evaluation, and implementation. Participants will gain a clear understanding of how these plans ensure equal access to education for students with disabilities.

Dr. Andrew Weatherill
Florida Department of Education
Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
(850) 245-0475
BEESsupport@fldoe.org

Taquira Thompson
Florida Department of Education
Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
Taquia.Thompson@fldoe.org

Twice Exceptional: Gifted with Disabilities for Parents

Bayhill 23

10:30 am to 11:30 am

Have you ever heard the term “twice exceptional,” or 2e? Children who are twice exceptional, meaning being gifted and having a disability, are often misunderstood. In this session, you will develop an awareness of 2e, identify challenges and dispel myths related to gifted and exceptionalities, and explore relevant strategies to help your child who may be identified as, or fit the category of twice exceptional.

Carol Beitler
FDLRS Reach

Rebecca Cox
FDLRS Heartland
426 School Street
Sebring, FL 33870
863-471-5511 ext 10406
rebecca.cox@fdlrs.heartland.org

When Love Isn't Enough: Resilience, Advocacy, and Legal Tools for Families Navigating Complex Disabilities

Bayhill 24

10:30 am to 11:30 am

Families supporting a child or adult with complex disabilities often face overwhelming behavioral, educational, and legal challenges. In this candid and practical session, attorney and author Nancy Ferraro shares lived experience raising a disabled child who survived early institutional trauma, along with the tools families can use to protect themselves and their loved one. Participants will learn about special needs planning, guardianship considerations, crisis-navigation strategies, and how to advocate effectively in systems that often overlook high-needs families. This workshop blends storytelling with actionable guidance to help families feel supported, informed, and empowered.

Nancy Ferraro

Ferraro Law, PA

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

Bayhill 25

10:30 am to 11:30 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. Key topics include: eligibility criteria for reimbursements; a step-by-step guide to submitting reimbursement requests; common documentation requirements; and proactive strategies to avoid delays or denials. This session aims to empower families to confidently manage and fully utilize their FES-UA scholarships.

Paula Nelson

Step Up For Students

P.O. Box 54429

Jacksonville, FL 32245

(877) 735-7837

pnelson@sufs.org

Better Together: Building Belonging Through Friendships

Bayhill 26

10:30 am to 11:30 am

This presentation explores the transformative power of one-to-one friendships and inclusive connections for people of all ages – from elementary school through adulthood. Through the Best Buddies Friendship Program, individuals with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities build meaningful relationships that foster confidence, communication skills, and a true sense of belonging. Attendees will learn how intentional connection can change lives, discover how the program supports inclusive opportunities at every stage of life, and gain practical strategies for encouraging authentic social experiences within their own families and communities.

Brittany Bennett

Best Buddies International

Dramatic Arts Meets Speech Therapy

Bayhill 27

10:30 am to 11:30 am

My work bridges the world of dramatic arts and speech therapy, blending performance techniques with therapeutic practice to enhance communication, confidence, and expression. Drawing from acting, voice, and movement, I create dynamic, creative sessions that empower individuals to find their authentic voices and connect more effectively with others. Through storytelling, improvisation, and role-play, clients explore language, emotion, and presence in transformative ways. This innovative approach nurtures both the art of performance and the science of speech, fostering personal growth, clarity, and expressive freedom.

Briana Falgiano
The Dramatic SLP LLC

Katrina Falgiano
The Dramatic SLP LLC

The Importance of Quality Support Coordination for Families, Self-Advocates, and the Systems That Support Them

Bayhill 28

10:30 am to 11:30 am

Quality support coordination plays a critical role in helping individuals with developmental disabilities live stable, meaningful lives within Florida's iBudget Waiver and CDC+ programs. This session centers on how thoughtful, consistent coordination supports personal choice, continuity of services, and day-to-day stability – especially during periods of uncertainty, as well as system and policy changes. Attendees will gain an understanding of how strong support coordination helps individuals and families navigate service provider networks and APD and Medicaid processes, prevents service disruptions, and promotes health, safety, and community inclusion. The session emphasizes person-centered practices that honor individual choices and goals while strengthening the long-term sustainability of Florida's iBudget waiver system.

Melissa Mazaeda
J&M Support Coordination Services, Inc
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Sarasota, FL 34237
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mmazaeda@jandmwsc.com



Military Town Hall

Bayhill 29

10:30 am to 11:30 am

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
scott@7-dippity.com

Maria Barkmeier
mvbark@hotmail.com

Sensory-Friendly Art Experiences

Bayhill 30

10:30 am to 11:30 am

Have you ever wondered what a sensory-friendly art experience is like? Interested in taking your child but not sure if they will be accommodating to your child's needs? This session is for you! We will discuss what a sensory-friendly experience entails and what a sensory-friendly time at a museum feels like, then examples of sensory-friendly experiences across the state will be provided.

Jennifer Sabo

Arts4All Florida

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jsabo@usf.edu



Creating Your Own Mental and Physical Safe Space

Bayhill 31

10:30 am to 11:30 am

This session weaves together my lived experiences as a person with Autism and ADHD to help others reconnect with their strengths, capacities, and sense of self. Too often, we move through life without pausing to understand what we are truly capable of – and what is realistically within our bandwidth. By taking intentional steps and honoring our neurodiversity, we can begin to shape environments that support our growth rather than drain it. Participants will learn how everyday choices – like who you surround yourself with, the routines you create, the rooms you spend time in, and even the thoughts you hold about yourself – can either nourish or drain your mental health. Through guided reflection, practical tools, and calming strategies, you'll discover how to cultivate spaces that feel nurturing, peaceful, and aligned with the person you're becoming. This session encourages you to redefine safety on your own terms and empowers you to build environments that promote rest, clarity, confidence, and emotional resilience. Whether you're seeking calm, structure, or freedom, this is your blueprint for creating a life that feels like home – inside and out.

Jericka Knox

Thriving Successfully, Knox Foundation, Hurdle



Understanding Florida's Mental Health System

Bayhill 32

10:30 am to 11:30 am



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

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Melissa Cyril

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Understanding Your Brain: Executive Functioning with Help from Inside Out

Bayhill 33

10:30 am to 11:30 am

In this fun and friendly presentation, we'll use the movie *Inside Out* to help us understand how our brains work, especially when it comes to executive functioning. That's a fancy term for the mental skills we use to stay organized, manage our feelings, make decisions, and get things done. With the help of Riley and her emotions – Joy, Sadness, Anger, Fear, and Disgust – we'll explore how the brain handles challenges, changes, and big feelings. We'll talk about things like remembering steps, staying calm when frustrated, and switching gears when plans change. This session is designed to include easy-to-understand examples, visuals, and interactive activities. You'll leave with helpful strategies and a better understanding of how your brain works – and how you can take charge like the real boss inside your mind!

Jill Hill

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Disability Decoded – Family Feud/Disability Trivia

Celebration 1

10:30 am to 11:30 am

Do you love *Family Feud*, *Jeopardy*, and game shows in general? Then this session is for you! Get ready to test your knowledge of disability pop culture and history in a fun, fast-paced face-off. Players will compete through trivia, myth-busting questions, and surprise challenges while learning cool facts, breaking stereotypes, and discovering why disability representation and awareness matter. Whether you're playing to win or cheering from the sidelines, this interactive game show experience promises laughs, learning, and plenty of "A-ha!" moments.

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Zeta Gil
The Florida Youth Council



The Anxious Generation: Is That Even a Thing? An Open Discussion for Kids, Teens, and Adults

Celebration 2

10:30 am to 11:30 am

Do you think there is a "youth anxiety epidemic"? If so, what are its causes and solutions? Dr. Elizabeth Wheeler (Betsy) invites you to chat about youth anxiety today. Betsy (age 66) and Harper Shin (23) are writing the middle-grade graphic novel *Regulate This!: "The Anxious Generation" Tell Their Own Stories*. She shares what they're learning from storytellers ages 11-18 across the United States and looks forward to hearing your thoughts. Betsy, a retired University of Oregon Disability Studies professor, researches the lives of youth and families with disabilities, creates inclusive theater, and loves making art with other disabled and neurodivergent people.

Elizabeth Wheeler
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Assistive Technology in Your Pocket: How Your Smartphone Can Help

Celebration 3

10:30 am to 11:30 am

Smartphones aren't just for calls and social media – they're powerful assistive technology tools that can make everyday life easier and more independent. This session will explore built-in accessibility features for Apple and Android phones like voice control, screen readers, magnifiers, and hearing support, as well as helpful apps for communication, daily living, mobility, learning, and organization. We'll cover how to customize settings for vision, hearing, dexterity, or cognitive needs, share practical examples for home, school, and work, and provide tips for families and caregivers to get the most out of these pocket-sized tools.

Marquesas Blimes

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Special Needs Planning: Planning for The Future Your Loved One Deserves

Celebration 4

10:30 am to 11:30 am

The presentation discusses how creating the proper estate plan can maximize public benefits for your loved one while meeting their needs and preserving them for the future. A copy of the presentation can be provided upon request.

Carlos Aguila

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Understanding Life Insurance – The Power of Leverage in Funding a Supplemental Needs Trust!

Celebration 5

10:30 am to 11:30 am



The seminar is geared towards helping parents understand the importance of financial leverage when properly using life insurance as a tool to fund a supplemental needs trust. One of the most misunderstood financial tools available to parents, the seminar will review how temporary term insurance can eventually be converted and be added as permanent leverage as part of their trust's funding strategy. Also covered will be how to add additional coverage by considering both parents' lives as part of an overall investment and eventual retirement plan. This seminar should be considered by all age groups, from young parents with newly diagnosed children through to early retirees trying to figure out their endgame. Today's life insurance is not your grandparents', or even your parents', life insurance!

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Life Care Planning: Making the Future More Secure for Your Dependent with Special Needs

Celebration 6

10:30 am to 11:30 am

This workshop will discuss what a Life Care Plan is, and the steps recommended to create one for a loved one with special needs. It 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 and quality of life for your loved one's well-being today and tomorrow.

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Back to the Basics: Little Hands Can Build Big Skills

Celebration 7

10:30 am to 11:30 am

While technology is widely used, it often limits opportunities for fine motor and visual motor skills, creative play, and social interaction. This session will explain the importance of using everyday objects and simple toys to help children build essential skills that support academic success and lifelong development.

Helene Lieberman
BlackBack Handwriting

Falling Off the Services Cliff/Successfully Navigating Life As An Adult

Celebration 8

10:30 am to 11:30 am

When individuals with autism and other intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) age out of the school system, families often face a sudden loss of services, structure, and support. In this clear and engaging session, Tonja Jones-Blount shares practical insights into the realities of adulthood after high school, including gaps in employment, day programs, housing, and community inclusion. Participants will learn advocacy strategies and planning tips, and discover helpful resources to better navigate adult services and support meaningful, purposeful lives beyond the classroom.

Tonja Jones-Blount
Dre's Haven, Inc.





Guardianship and Alternatives, and Restoration of Rights

Celebration 9

10:30 am to 11:30 am

This presentation provides an in-depth look at Florida’s guardianship and guardian advocacy law, highlighting both its intended protections and its potential to limit individual autonomy. Attendees will learn about less restrictive alternatives such as supported decision-making, powers of attorney, and advance directives, as well as the critical process of restoring rights when guardianship is no longer appropriate, and other tools that promote autonomy while meeting support needs of the young individual with disabilities. We’ll examine legal standards, practical implementation, and how families, professionals, and advocates can empower individuals to retain their rights and independence.

Talhia Rangel

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Special Education PTAs in Diverse and Inclusive Schools

Celebration 10

10:30 am to 11:30 am

The Florida Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is the largest volunteer child advocacy organization in the state. We advocate for the wellness, safety, and education of all children. Our members are able to form partnerships and coalitions to work towards our mission. This presentation will share information and resources that allow participants to help make their child’s potential a reality by engaging and empowering them to advocate for their children. Florida PTA has over 280,000 members. Information will also be provided on how to join the Florida Special Education PTA.

Lawrence Clermont

Florida PTA

Charman Postel

Florida PTA



Career Compass: Pointing You Toward Your Future

Celebration 12

10:30 am to 11:30 am

This engaging and interactive presentation introduces students and families to Career Clusters and the Florida Post-secondary Comprehensive Transition Programs (FPCTP) across Florida, helping to align students’ interests and skills with meaningful post-secondary pathways that lead to employment. The session empowers students and families to explore passions, understand available programs, and take actionable steps toward a fulfilling career. Students will leave with a clearer understanding of their career interests, knowledge of FPCTP opportunities, and a roadmap to pursue programs that align with their goals. Educators and families will gain tools to support students in making informed decisions about their futures.

Diana Dawn Scott

Florida Center for Students with Unique Abilities

(FCSUA)

Xingyao Chen

Florida Center for Students with Unique Abilities

(FCSUA)



Entrepreneurship: Hear My Story and Be Inspired!

Celebration 13

10:30 am to 11:30 am

Allison has been a dog treat chef for her company Doggy Delights by Allison for over 8 years. She will tell you about her journey – what inspired her, how she learned to cook and bake, and what it takes to become your own boss. Allison will share resources, and her sidekicks (parents) will add their perspectives.

John Fogarty

Doggy Delights by Allison LLC

Clermont, FL 34711

(630) 291-6740

DoggyDelightsByAllison@gmail.com



Surviving Emergencies: Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery 101

Celebration 14

10:30 am to 11:30 am

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

karen.hagan@apdcares.org



Building Your Family-Run Organization: A Hands-on Presentation from FROM

Celebration 15

10:30 am to 11:30 am

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 The Family Cafe's FROM (Family-Run Organization Movement) program, 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 to take with you. We will also cover the topic and focus of understanding what it means to be sustainable using the tools that are in the Guidebook. Attendees will also have an opportunity to speak with John Ferrone, family member and consultant, about their specific project or initiative.

John Ferrone

Ferrone Associates

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Parents as the Bridge: Connecting Home, School, and Student Success + Q&A

Celebration 16

10:30 am to 11:30 am



“Parents as the Bridge” highlights how families and schools work together to support student success. Parents learn simple, practical ways to strengthen communication, routines, and collaboration – building a strong partnership that helps children thrive at school.

The presentation introduces the “bridge” framework, built on a foundation of collaboration and strengthened by five key pillars:

- Early identification and planning
- Consistent home routines
- Effective communication
- Understanding school supports
- Advocacy through partnership

Together, these pillars create alignment between home and school, encourage shared problem solving, and promote positive educational outcomes. Participants leave with practical strategies, reflection tools, and a clear understanding that small, intentional actions, can make a meaningful difference in their child’s educational journey.

Jason Acosta

Children’s Medical Services Health Plan

Jason.acosta@SunshineHealth.com



Active Kids Love Rock n Roll (Ages 11 and Younger)

Manatee Spring II

10:30 am to 11:30 am

Dancing is an excellent tool for encouraging children to be active, listen attentively, and follow instructions. By introducing music and dancing into a child’s routine, caregivers can help foster healthy habits from a young age. This class is designed to show caregivers how to use music and dance utilizing the Zumba formula to promote confidence, boost self-esteem, enhance memory, develop coordination, and increase cultural understanding. The session is best suited for children with disabilities up to 11 years old who can walk on their own, accompanied by a caregiver to support them during the session.

Paula Burns

Burns Dance & Fitness

Cerebral Palsy Roundtable

Peacock Spring

10:30 am to 11:30 am

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

Empowering Independence – A Closer Look at Florida’s ICMC Program

Plaza Intl Ballroom

10:30 am to 11:30 am



Join Florida Community Care (FCC) and the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) for an open and informative conversation about Florida’s Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Comprehensive Managed Care (ICMC) Program.

Learn how the program works, what services are available, and how it supports independence and choice. This session is designed to be engaging and informative, with opportunities to hear from program experts and ask questions in a welcoming, open format.

Panelists include representatives from:

- Florida Community Care (FCC)
- Florida Agency for Healthcare Administration (AHCA)
- Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD)

Celebration of Life

Rainbow Spring II

10:30 am to 11:30 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.

Paula Petry

paula@paulapetry.com

11:30 am to 12:00 pm	Gatorland Animal Show: Live Alligators and Crocodiles, Regency O -P
11:30 am to 12:00 pm	Performance by the Pyramid Players, Regency Rotunda
12:00 pm to 12:30 pm	Performance by Katerina Rancano, Plaza Intl Foyer
12:00 pm to 12:30 pm	Performance by Joy Street, Regency Bridge
12:30 pm to 2:30 pm	Saturday Keynote - Patrice: The Movie, Plaza Intl Ballroom
2:30 pm to 3:00 pm	Red Carpet Experience, Plaza Intl Foyer
2:30 pm to 3:00 pm	Performance by Wings to Fly Dance Company, Regency Rotunda



3:00 pm to 4:00 pm CONCURRENT SESSIONS



No Dad Left Behind: Building a Brotherhood of Advocacy and Support

Bayhill 17

3:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Fathers often navigate the world of disability services and resources feeling like outsiders in a system designed for others. This interactive round-table-style discussion invites dads to break that isolation by finding other fathers in their local community or beyond. We will discuss practical strategies for cutting through the technical and convoluted jargon and leveraging our powerful DAD voices to advocate effectively for our children and others. By sharing our unique perspectives, we can create a seat at the table where a father's voice is heard, valued, and respected. Come find support, share resources, build lasting support networks and discover the peace that comes from a shared journey. By the end, you will have actionable takeaways, identify established Florida-based "Dad groups," and have immediate access to a band of brothers, and renewed encouragement and motivation to keep putting one foot in front of another.

Sergio Cruz

Caminos hacia la Posibilidad: Planificación para una Educación Postsecundaria Exitosa para Estudiantes con Discapacidad Intelectual

Bayhill 18

3:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Esta sesión guía a las familias en la preparación de estudiantes con discapacidad intelectual para la universidad desde la escuela secundaria. Los asistentes explorarán estrategias para fomentar la autodefensa, el desarrollo de habilidades académicas y sociales, y establecer altas expectativas. Aprenderán estrategias prácticas para colaborar con los educadores de secundaria y preparatoria para crear planes de transición personalizados. Los asistentes obtendrán herramientas prácticas para empoderar a sus hijos para que se matriculen con éxito y prosperen en entornos postsecundarios.

Jacqueline Marquez-Duprey

Florida Center for Students with Unique Abilities

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A Collaborative Approach to Supporting the Individual Needs of Students Who Are Deaf/Hard of Hearing and or Blind/Visually Impaired in General Education Environments

Bayhill 19

3:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Children with sensory loss have unique needs that can be met through the collaborative efforts of parents, family members, teachers, school staff, and statewide resources. Join FIN, the Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually Impaired, and the Resource Materials and Technology Center for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing to learn about those statewide resources and shared strategies to support children with sensory loss.

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Sara Tinti
RMTC- DHH
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Devon Lynn
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Embrace, Empower, Cultivate: Fostering Independence in Children

Bayhill 20

3:00 pm to 4:00 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 them 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 / Hard of Hearing
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APD: At a Glance

Bayhill 21

3:00 pm to 4:00 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, Pre-Enrollment, 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
liesl.ramos@apdcares.org



Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS) Update: Statewide Data, Policies, and Parent Resources

Bayhill 22

3:00 pm to 4:00 pm

This session will provide families with a statewide update from the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS). Updates will include key exceptional student education policies and procedures, current data trends, and an overview of the State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) and related indicator data. The presentation will also highlight results from the ESE Parent Survey and share available resources and supports for families of students with disabilities. This session is designed to help parents better understand statewide priorities, performance measures, and how BEESS uses data and parent feedback to support students and families.

Patricia Bodiford

Presenting Your Medicaid Fair Hearing

Bayhill 23

3:00 pm to 4:00 pm



This presentation will assist the attendee 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

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An 8-Step Life Planning Tool for a Secure Future

Bayhill 24

3:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Many families worry about their loved one's future but feel overwhelmed about where to begin. In this session, families will learn about a clear, practical 8-step life planning tool that brings focus, calm, and direction. Instead of trying to plan everything at once, this approach helps families identify what matters most now and what can wait. You'll walk through each step together and receive a simple life planning toolkit you can take home and use right away. Families will leave feeling more organized, more confident, and better prepared to take meaningful next steps toward a secure, fulfilling future.

Eric Goll

Eric Goll Coaching & Consulting



Together We Rise: A Parent's Journey Supporting a Child with Autism and Selective Mutism

Bayhill 25

3:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Raising a child on the autism spectrum who also experiences selective mutism is a journey filled with both quiet struggles and powerful breakthroughs. In this presentation, I will share a personal story of supporting my son, Leto, a profoundly bright and curious child, through the unique challenges of autism and limited verbal communication in school and social settings. With a focus on real-life strategies and small victories, this presentation will explore how thoughtful collaboration between family, teachers, therapists, and community programs, including FAU CARD, played a vital role in Leto's growth. I will reflect on the emotional and practical steps taken to build trust, foster communication, and embrace Leto's strengths. Attendees will leave with encouragement, useful insights, and a reminder of how powerful it can be to walk this journey together, with love, patience, and a strong support network.

Qianxin Liang

Simplifying Access to Health Care Coverage for Kids

Bayhill 26

3:00 pm to 4:00 pm

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.

Jena Grignon

Florida Healthy Kids Corporation

Letter of Intent: Writing the "Manual" for Your Child

Bayhill 27

3:00 pm to 4:00 pm

A letter of intent is a non-legal document that provides future caregivers with a roadmap of your child's life. It tells future caregivers how to make your child happy, how to de-escalate when your child is overwhelmed, and guides caregivers to provide the kind of life you envision for your child. We will walk through the five pillars of a letter of intent and you will get your own template to build for yourself and your child.

Barbara Misener

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I'll Tell You What I Want, What I Really Really Want . . . Special Education Knowledge

Bayhill 28

3:00 pm to 4:00 pm

The US Navy Southeast Region's Special Education Liaison and Special Needs Attorney will go over the most common special education questions. These common questions will be surveyed from Navy Service Members around the United States. Though the survey will be from Navy Families, the common questions and the recommendations and legal rights that apply are the same for non-military families. Come sail into this sea of knowledge with us and know that the journey might get a little bit "spicy."

Sonia McGonigle
US Navy

Iana Benjamin
US Navy

Planning for Transition to Adulthood and Beyond for Persons with Disabilities – Putting Together the Pieces of a Complicated Puzzle

Bayhill 30

3:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Assessing the needs for a person with a disability as far as government benefits, education, financial support, day activities, and future needs can be overwhelming and frustrating. This presentation focuses on what benefits and legal protections are available while a person with a disability is transitioning to adulthood, and how needs change as a person ages. The pieces of the puzzle to be explored include services under the IDEA, Home and Community Based Services through Medicaid, Social Security, and other governmental and community resources available. Additionally, the presenter will discuss the timeline/chronology of the availability and appropriateness of different benefits through the lifetime, providing caregivers and self-advocates with a framework of what to expect and when.

Sarah Sullivan
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ssullivan@arcjacksonville.org



Coloring for Quietude

Bayhill 31

3:00 pm to 4:00 pm

This session demonstrates all the healing, calming, gratifying qualities of coloring your way to quietude. This arts and crafts activity even helps to maintain equipment up to code and up to date. There is a magical quality about brightening anything up with coloring. It begins with sheets of papers. Then the coloring process can happen anywhere to anything, creating extra brilliance at any time.

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Lived Experience Matters: FASD Through the Voice of a Self-Advocate

Bayhill 32
3:00 pm to 4:00 pm

This powerful and insightful training offers participants a unique opportunity to understand Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) through the lived experience of a young adult diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. Co-presented by Alex and his mother, this session highlights both the challenges and strengths that come with the diagnosis, as well as the importance of empathy, communication, and support in the journey of individuals with FASD and their families. Alex shares his personal story, explaining what the diagnosis means to him and how it has shaped his everyday life from school and relationships to independence and advocacy. With honesty and heart, he discusses both his struggles and the “superpowers” that come with his unique brain. His mother offers a parent’s perspective, sharing the path they’ve taken together to better understand and support one another.

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Alex Carver
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Raise a Capable Kid Regardless of Diagnosis or Challenge

Bayhill 33
3:00 pm to 4:00 pm

No two kids are the same, but Dr. Winking’s research shows that parents who raise their child to be capable are similar in some very important ways! In this interactive session, author and researcher Dr. Deborah Winking introduces the 12 Parenting Habits(TM) from her 2024 book, *Raising Capable Kids – The 12 Habits Every Parent Needs Regardless of their Child’s Diagnosis or Challenge*. She offers compelling real-life stories of the habits in action and the science behind why they are so critical to raising kids with independence and agency. Despite our best efforts, educators and parents too often are working at cross purposes and our children are the ones who lose out. In order for the nearly 20 percent of school aged children who identify as neurodiverse or disabled to truly thrive, we need a “mind meld” between parents, caregivers, educators, and school leaders. *Capable* speaks to not only parents, but also teachers, therapists, and school leaders who care deeply about supporting students. Both parents and practitioners will walk away with strategies for making The 12 Habits their own. The result: Capable kids – regardless of diagnosis or challenge!

Deborah Winking
Parent
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(970) 686-7361
debwinking@outlook.com





Nothing About Us Without Us – Empowering the Youth Voice

Celebration 1

3:00 pm to 4:00 pm

This session will engage youth with disabilities in building confidence and skills to become advocates for the next generation. Participants will have space to share lived experiences and discuss barriers they are facing during transition – such as moving from school to work, employment, or independent living. Participants will leave feeling equipped with practical advocacy tools and empowered to make a difference, knowing their voices matter and are needed in the next generation.

Sarah Goldman

Florida Independent Living Council



Modern Higher Education: Navigating Recent Changes to an Existing Framework

Celebration 2

3:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Today's world changes quickly, perhaps more quickly than it ever has before. The Florida State University (FSU) University of Choice (UoC) Initiative returns for its 10th annual presentation to address the evolution of modern higher education and its implications for students with disabilities. This engaging session will feature current FSU students who have found success in the most recent changes in academia. They will provide practical strategies, grounded in experience, for selecting the right school, assessing accessibility, living as a disabled student, conquering academic difficulties, and thriving after graduation. Because higher education looks much different than it did even 10 years ago, our 10th annual presentation will focus on emerging technologies and trends that impact independent living, studying, and subsequent employment. UoC panelists will begin by looking at the process of selecting schools and assessing accessibility. The discussion will then shift to post-acceptance concerns, addressing how recent technological developments have impacted living with a disability and thriving as a disabled student. The panel will conclude by looking at current disability-related employment trends and how they can be leveraged for success as recent disabled graduates. Through real stories of challenges and triumphs, this discussion will provide actionable insights and best practices for succeeding in modern higher education.

Roy Thorson

JR Harding

Ashley Evans

Kristen Mancinelli



FAAST: Access to Assistive Technology Made Simple

Celebration 3

3:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Curious about assistive technology and how it can make daily life easier? This session gives families an easy-to-understand overview of FAAST's free services, including how we help people find, get, and try out assistive technology. Learn about our lending library, where you can test devices before deciding what works best for you. We'll cover practical tips for using technology at home, school, or work, and show how these tools can boost independence and improve everyday life.

Marquesas Blimes

FAAST- Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology

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Tallahassee, FL 32303

(850) 487-3278

mblimes@faast.org

Tim McCann

FAAST - Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology



ABLE United 101: Empowering Floridians with Disabilities Through Financial Independence

Celebration 4
3:00 pm to 4:00 pm



This introductory session provides a comprehensive overview of ABLE United, Florida's 529A savings and investment program designed to help individuals with severe disabilities and diagnoses achieve financial independence while maintaining critical public benefits. Director John Finch will break down program eligibility, account ownership, contributions, investment options, and how ABLE accounts interact with federal benefits such as SSI, Medicaid, HUD, and SNAP. Key takeaways will include what ABLE United is, why it exists, and how it differs from other savings tools; eligibility rules including the age-46 expansion; understanding contributions, withdrawals, and Qualified Disability Expenses (QDEs); how ABLE accounts protect eligibility for Medicaid, SSI, SNAP, and HUD programs; and practical examples of how families and individuals use ABLE accounts day-to-day.

John Finch
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john.finch@ableunited.com



A Clear View of Retirement: The Confidence of A Well-Planned Life

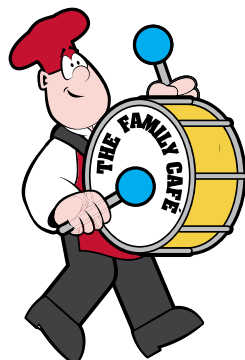
Celebration 5
3:00 pm to 4:00 pm



The seminar will emphasize how parents planning on funding a special needs trust for their disabled son or daughter should think differently as it pertains to retirement. Topics will include understanding how to potentially fund and leverage the proper type of life insurance, along with how to reposition deferred retirement accounts to maximize the after-tax benefit for their special someone. The seminar will also discuss how to potentially maximize Social Security benefits for the entire family. The target audience that would benefit most from the seminar would be parents within 10-15 years of their planned retirement.

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

Celebration 6

3:00 pm to 4:00 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 survivor's 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 dependency to independence, 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 be the focus.

Danielle West-Lane
Social Security Administration



Early Steps: Empowering Development One Step at a Time

Celebration 7

3:00 pm to 4:00 pm

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
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(941) 487-5400
mariacadigan@hpcswf.com





Understanding Visual Impairments in Young Children: Signs, Impact, and Strategies

Celebration 8

3:00 pm to 4:00 pm

This presentation will provide a comprehensive overview of visual impairments in young children and their impact on development. We will begin by defining what a visual impairment is and how it differs from other vision challenges. Next, we will explore common signs that may indicate a child has a visual impairment, including subtle behaviors that are often overlooked. The session will also cover common diagnoses associated with visual impairments and discuss why signs are frequently missed in children with multiple impairments. We will examine how visual impairments affect various aspects of development, including motor, cognitive, and social skills. Finally, participants will learn simple strategies to promote vision stimulation through engaging activities and discover practical next steps for referrals, resources, and collaboration with specialists. This presentation aims to equip educators, caregivers, and support staff with the knowledge and tools needed to better support children with visual impairments.

Cathy Glass

Florida School for the Deaf & the Blind

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Katrina Ressa

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Messy Handwriting Meets Modern Tools: How Families Can Support Writing in the Age of AI

Celebration 9

3:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Handwriting struggles can be frustrating for children and exhausting for families. Whether your child is learning to write, avoiding it altogether, or feeling discouraged by messy work, you're not alone – and there is hope. In this practical and encouraging session, occupational therapist and handwriting expert Polly Benson shares why handwriting is still an important foundation for learning, confidence, and independence, even in today's tech-driven world.

Families will learn what really helps improve handwriting (and what doesn't), how to support their child's fine motor development at home, and when it's okay to lean on technology. Polly will also introduce how modern tools – including assistive technology and AI – can reduce barriers, increase access, and help individuals with disabilities communicate, learn, and express themselves more independently. You'll leave with clear strategies, fresh perspective, and the reassurance that you don't have to choose between handwriting and technology – you can use both to help your child thrive.

Polly Benson

LegiLiner, LLC





Autism/Neurodiversity and Suicide Prevention: Keeping our Kids Alive

Celebration 10
3:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Neurodiverse/autistic people continue to be at a higher risk of suicide. According to the Autism and Suicide Prevention Workgroup, “Warning signs of imminent suicidal behavior in the general public do not represent the unique needs of the autism community.” Let’s take a moment to look at some of the suicide warning signs specific to autistic/neurodiverse people as well as how some autistic traits lead to thwarted belonging-ness and perceived burdensome-ness. We will also discuss some action steps to help keep autistic/neurodiverse youth alive. In addition, a self-advocate and his family will discuss how they navigate suicidal ideation and ongoing mental health challenges.

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Employment Superpowers: Level Up with Disability Innovation Fund (DIF) Resources!

Celebration 12
3:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Every family deserves resources that make the transition to employment feel exciting and attainable – not overwhelming. In this lively session, get ready to unlock a variety of DIF-powered “employment superpowers.” We’ll spotlight innovative DIF projects across the country, share what’s working, and – best of all – show you where to grab these resources for free. Whether you’re a parent, youth, advocate, or supporter, you’ll walk away with new confidence, new strategies, and at least one actionable step you can use right away. By the end of this session, participants will be able to: understand the core purpose of the DIF Program; navigate the National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials (NCRTM) to find employment resources that fit your needs; pick one tool and plan how to try it at home, school, or work; and name one “superpower move” or action step they want to take next.

Lindsay Rassoull, MS CRC
New Editions Consulting



What Do You Want To Be When You Grow Up? How Post-secondary Education Counseling Helps Discover the Answer

Celebration 13
3:00 pm to 4:00 pm

This presentation shares information about post-secondary education counseling, a service offered through Florida’s Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). By empowering students with disabilities to jump-start their futures through post-secondary education counseling, we can explore the question, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” Join us to explore what this service offers and discover how it helps students achieve their higher education and career dreams. We’ll highlight key aspects, including interest exploration, personalized guidance, and ongoing assistance, that make a difference, emphasizing innovative approaches like technology, informal assessment, and partnerships with educational institutions to improve student outcomes.

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Devin O’Connor, M.Ed.
The Grow Group, Inc.
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devin@thegrowgroup.org



How to Not Just Survive an Emergency, but THRIVE!

Celebration 14
3:00 pm to 4:00 pm

We can prepare for every practical contingency of an emergency and still feel lost at sea when emergencies actually come crashing into our lives. Join Amy Bodkin, an autistic school psychologist and mother of two autistic children, as she shares about coping with the crises that life inevitably throws at us from both her personal and professional experience. Specifically, this session will be focusing on how we can help our families weather the storms of life using Amy’s “Stop, Drop, and Roll” method!

Amy Bodkin
Amy Bodkin Consulting



Florida’s Self-Advocacy Movement Needs You! Here’s How to Get Involved / A Presentation of FL SAND’s Breaking Barriers Training Academy

Celebration 15
3:00 pm to 4:00 pm

This breakout session will equip self-advocates and their supporters with the information they need to get involved in Florida’s self-advocacy movement through a variety of opportunities, such as in-person and virtual self-advocacy groups, training, and sharing their voices on local and state government boards, councils, and advisory groups. The all-self-advocate training team will also share simple and creative ways to incorporate self-determination and self-advocacy skills in one’s everyday life.

Chatequa Pinkston
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(813) 410-2255
chatequap@yahoo.com

Amanda Ranochak
Christy Shultz
Elcana Jean-Pierre
Lequina Knox

So Many Questions – Is A Service Dog the Answer?

Celebration 16
3:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Individuals with a variety of conditions may benefit from a service dog partner. However, a service dog is not the right answer for everyone. In this session we will discuss the factors to consider when deciding whether or not to pursue adding a service dog to your life, such as medical restrictions, lifestyle, living circumstances, and familial or community support systems. We will also provide demonstrations of various tasks a service dog is able to provide to assist individuals with mobility limitations, ASD, and/or PTSD.

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Wendy Hartman
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Susan Napier
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Stronger Together: Empowering Families of Children with Special Needs Through Movement and Healthy Habits

Coral Spring II
3:00 pm to 4:00 pm

This engaging lecture and hands-on workshop shares the inspiring personal and professional journey of a strength coach who discovered her calling in working with adaptive clients and their families. Parents will hear firsthand how fitness and wellness can be adapted to meet each child’s unique abilities, creating opportunities for growth, confidence, and joy in movement. Through practical demonstrations and simple, family-friendly strategies, participants will learn how to: incorporate exercise and movement into daily routines at home; adapt fitness activities to meet a wide range of abilities and developmental stages; foster healthy habits that benefit both children and their families; and build confidence in supporting their child’s physical, emotional, and social well-being. This interactive session equips parents with real-life tools, encouragement, and hope - showing that with creativity and consistency, exercise can become a positive and empowering part of everyday life.

Anna Woods
sheStrength
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Hillsboro, KS 67063
(620) 877-7503
anna@shestrength.com



Wings to Fly Dance Company

Manatee Spring II
3:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Turning impossible dreams into reality! Join us for a fun, inclusive dance class where everyone can move, express, and belong. Watch us soar – and come fly with us!

Tara Patterson
Wings to Fly Dance Company

Autism Roundtable

Peacock Spring
3:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Connecting with others who truly understand your journey can transform the way you navigate life as a parent, caregiver, youth, or professional supporting someone on the autism spectrum. This interactive session invites you to engage in meaningful conversations, exchange practical insights, and build lasting relationships with people who “get it.” Together, we’ll explore real-life strategies, emotional resilience, and the power of shared experience. Whether you’re just beginning your journey or seeking new ways to support your loved one, you’ll leave with renewed hope, useful tools, and connections that can make all the difference.

Cindy Borroto

Maureen Morris

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

Red Carpet Experience, Plaza Intl Foyer
Performance by the Pyramid Players, Regency Rotunda

4:30 pm to 5:30 pm CONCURRENT SESSIONS



Autism 2 Awesome: Allow Your Greatest Crisis to Become Your Greatest Miracle

Bayhill 17

4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

In 2003, Kerry L. Brooks's son was diagnosed with autism, devastating his family. Their physician offered only two recommendations: prepare their son for a group home, and focus on having other children. Kerry was no medical expert, but he was a determined father and his son's biggest advocate. Refusing to follow the doctor's orders, he and his wife continued to search – not for a cure, but for strategies that would help their son reach his highest potential. In "Autism 2 Awesome," Kerry shares these strategies and his family's journey from devastating diagnosis to high school honors graduation. No matter the challenge, every parent can benefit from looking within, trusting their instincts, and most importantly, celebrating every miracle.

Kerry Brooks

Autism 2 Awesome

(773) 865-0444

support@autism2awesome.com

You Have Options: Exploring Alternatives When Traditional School Isn't Working

Bayhill 18

4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

This session addresses a critical need among families navigating special education by providing a comprehensive guide to non-traditional educational alternatives available in Florida. Parents will learn about microschoools, homeschool programs, virtual academies, and specialized learning centers, along with practical strategies for accessing these options through Florida's Family Empowerment Scholarship (FES-UA) and other funding mechanisms. Attendees will gain actionable knowledge on evaluating which alternative best fits their child's unique learning profile, understanding the step-by-step transition process from public school, and advocating effectively for their child's educational needs. With Florida's expanding school choice landscape, this session empowers families with the current information and confidence needed to make informed decisions about their special needs student's education.

Alexandra Batista Rodriguez

Steps Learning Center LLC

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abatista@stepslearn.com



How Does Religion Impact Our Daily Lives as People with Autism?

Bayhill 19

4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

Virtually every religious tradition has adherents with autism, and religious traditions play a major role in the daily lives of many people with autism and their families. However, many places of worship routinely struggle to accommodate the needs of their autistic attendees. Listen to two autistic adults from different religious backgrounds describe how religion has impacted their daily lives, and how they ultimately found some degree of acceptance within the religious traditions they identify with.

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jmw820@comcast.net

Pawesome Actions!

Bayhill 20

4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

A “pawfessional” demonstration packed with service dogs performing trained tasks! This will be the chance to get to see dogs trained for all types of disabilities in action performing various tasks. Many times dogs are trained for one or two tasks to meet the basic requirements in the ADA. This is a chance to learn how dogs can be trained to perform many tasks for our needs, such as finding someone to get help or finding the way out, or alerting to sounds for the deaf, retrieving items or taking them to someone else. perhaps helping with autism, OCD and repetitive behaviors or seizures, or even helping with psychiatric disorders. Have you wondered how the service dogs could actually help you or your child? Come and see what they actually do.

Carol Christopherson
Florida Service Dogs, Inc.
14897 Yellow Water Lane
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(904) 226-6982
buddynme@bellsouth.net

Consumer Directed Care Plus (CDC+) Program Overview

Bayhill 21

4:30 pm to 5:30 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 its requirements. Bring any questions you have about CDC+.

Susan Nipper
susan.nipper@apdcares.org



Understanding the Workforce Credential Program and the Requirements (HB 1105)

Bayhill 22

4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

This session will provide an overview of the Workforce Credential Program available to high school students with disabilities. Established in 2025 by House Bill 1105, the program prepares students for workplace success through structured learning experiences that build employability skills, workplace safety awareness, job-seeking skills, and self-advocacy. The program is designed to be implemented throughout the school year and provides flexibility in pacing to support students with disabilities as they work toward earning recognized workforce credentials.

Noal Weiland

CDC+ Support Broker: What Is It and How Can It Help Me?

Bayhill 23

4:30 pm to 5:30 pm



The presentation on Support Broker provides an overview of the CDC+ program's current challenges and highlights the benefits of a new proposed service, Support Broker, for self-directed services. Proposed requirements and service details will be discussed. DRF proposed creating a new professional service, Support Broker, for the APD Consumer Directed Care+ (CDC+) program. This new service will result in modifications to the current roles of the CDC+ Representatives and CDC+ Support Consultants. When implemented, it will use existing appropriations, result in increased administrative efficiency, and make it possible for more consumers to participate in the program.

Bradley Hunt

Disability Rights Florida

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(850) 617-9722

Bradleyh@disabilityrightsflorida.org

2026 Special Olympics USA Games/Super Bowl 60

Bayhill 24

4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

In this session I'll be sharing about my experiences as a reporter at the Super Bowl and talking about being a reporter at the upcoming Special Olympics USA Games in Minnesota.

Malcom Harris-Gowdie

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From Interview Room to Courtroom: Evidence-Based Strategies to Support Dual System Youth on the Spectrum

Bayhill 25

4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

Individuals on the autism spectrum face significant challenges in the justice system, particularly during forensic interviews and courtroom testimony. This session examines the disclosure process – from initial interview to trial – offering evidence-based strategies to reduce communication deficits and suggestibility. Participants will learn techniques for adapting interviews to address sensory sensitivities, processing differences, and alternative communication methods, ensuring accurate and confident testimony. The session also covers courtroom preparation and multidisciplinary collaboration models to support neurodivergent individuals while maintaining legal integrity. Attendees will gain practical tools to promote meaningful access to the justice system for vulnerable populations through evidence-based practices.

Meg Lietzau

Center for Autism and Related Disabilities

Oral Health Update – Access to Care and Policy Updates

Bayhill 26

4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

The presenters represent two managed care companies that administer Medicaid and Florida Healthy Kids (CHIP) benefits in Florida. The presenters will discuss how managed care operates, provide information on how to access dental care in the state, and discuss recent developments related to policy that can impact the delivery of oral health care in Florida.

Douglas Manning
SunLife/DentaQuest

Tamara Kay-Tibby
Liberty Dental Plan

When Therapy Feels Like Play: Supporting Auditory Processing

Bayhill 27

4:30 pm to 5:30 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
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Caregiver Support Through Digital Communities & Entertainment

Bayhill 28

4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

Unlock the potential of video gamification in your educational and professional endeavors with Vault127's engaging hour-long workshop tailored for parents, educators, spouses, and businesses. This unique opportunity invites participants to dive into the dynamic realm of video game-based learning and communities for caregiver and spousal support, which not only enhances essential life skills but also fosters engagement and nurtures creativity among learners. Led by Kat Mahoney – a distinguished former VIP Military Spouse of the Year, accomplished author, founder of the Kids of America's Heroes family nonprofit, Mental Health America speaker, and dedicated businesswoman and mother – and her daughter, Nova – a social influencer in community engagement for neurodivergent students – participants will explore innovative strategies designed to transform their approaches to teaching, training, and inspiring caregivers and spouses. Join us in this relationship forward-thinking environment to unlock new pathways for personal and professional growth for the caregiver or spouse.

Kat Mahoney
Vault127

Nova Mahoney
Voidstarz Art

Music Therapy Beyond Music: Building Communication, Coping, and Life Skills

Bayhill 30

4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

Music therapy is often misunderstood as simply teaching music, but its true power lies in how music can support meaningful, everyday goals. In this session, participants will learn how music therapy is used to build communication, emotional regulation, attention, coping strategies, and functional life skills for children and adults with disabilities. This presentation will explore how board-certified music therapists intentionally use music to support non-musical outcomes such as improving expressive and receptive communication, increasing engagement, supporting transitions, reducing anxiety, and strengthening social and daily living skills. Real-life examples will be shared to help families understand what music therapy looks like in practice across different ages and ability levels. Attendees will leave with practical, easy-to-implement music-based strategies they can use at home, in the community, and in educational settings – no musical experience required. Resources and guidance will also be provided to help families better understand when music therapy may be appropriate and how it can complement other therapies and supports.

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How to Avoid Burnout When the Executive Isn't Functioning

Bayhill 31
4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

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. Perfect for individuals, caregivers, and professionals seeking actionable tools to thrive amidst challenges.

Korin Menard

Shoshanah Mercado
Dancing In The Rain Psychology



Supporting Student Well-Being: Resiliency and Mental Health Services in Florida Schools

Bayhill 32
4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

This presentation informs and engages parents by explaining how the Florida Department of Education has implemented resiliency-focused initiatives that prepare educators to address students' mental health needs. In addition, the presentation will outline school-based mental health services and explain how families can access these supports.

Mirtha Santisi
Department of Education



Mental Health 101 with NAMI Central Florida

Bayhill 33
4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

“Mental Health 101” with NAMI Central Florida offers a foundational look at mental health and wellness. This presentation explores what mental health is, common warning signs of mental health challenges, and ways to seek help and offer support. Designed for individuals, families, and community members, this session encourages open conversation and connects participants to free, local NAMI Central Florida programs and resources.

Freddy Morello
NAMI Central Florida

Parenting in the Deep End: Rare Disease, Disability & Florida's Parent Caregiver Pathways

Celebration 1
4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

Join a mom navigating life with a child who has a rare, terminal condition as she shares her family's story and path to becoming a paid parent caregiver. Learn about the creation of the Paid Parent Caregiver Florida community, the fight behind HB 391, and how families can access support. We'll explore advocacy, real barriers, and practical next steps. Bring your questions and your voice.

Yasmina Halim
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Port Richey, FL 34668
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yasjess@hotmail.com



Siblings: You Too Are Seen

Celebration 2
4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

Siblings of individuals with disabilities often grow up balancing love, pride, responsibility, and invisibility – all at the same time. This session focuses on the sibling perspective as part of the whole family journey, sharing insights gathered from conversations with siblings and families over time. Through real stories and reflection, we explore common sibling experiences and practical ways families can offer support without adding pressure. Participants will leave with greater awareness of how family dynamics shape sibling identity and advocacy, along with simple, intentional ways to strengthen connection, communication, and inclusion. This session is designed to help parents, caregivers, and professionals better recognize siblings as individuals with their own needs, voices, and journeys.

Tom Hobbs
Showing Our Strengths Publications
Tom@JourneybookStories.com

Marcy Renken
Showing Our Strengths Publication
1108 Palo vista Rd
Greenwood, IN 46143
(317) 489-1557
Marcy@JourneyBookStories.com



Accessibility & Assistive Technology Across the Lifespan: Strategies for School, Work, Home, and Community

Celebration 3
4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

This presentation will explore practical and evidence-based strategies for integrating assistive technology (AT) and accessibility accommodations across varied environments – including school, home, work, and community settings. Drawing from professional experience in special education and AT implementation, it will cover selection, customization, and effective use of communication, mobility, sensory, and environmental supports. Attendees will leave with actionable insights and a list of resources to support individuals with disabilities in everyday living, learning, and employment.

Jeffrey Davis
Accessibility Clinic Inc
1357 Selbydon Way
Winter Garden, FL 34787
(352) 536-4981
jeffrey.davis@accessibilityclinic.org



Understanding SSI Financial Eligibility: What Counts, What Doesn't, and Why It Matters

Celebration 4
4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) eligibility is determined not only by disability, but by complex financial rules that often cause confusion and unexpected denials. This session provides a clear, practical overview of SSI financial eligibility, focusing on how income and resources are evaluated and how common misunderstandings can impact benefits. Attendees will learn about: the difference between earned and unearned income for SSI purposes; what counts as a resource and what is excluded; how financial eligibility affects benefit amounts and ongoing eligibility; and common financial mistakes that lead to delays or denials. This presentation is designed for individuals with disabilities, family members, advocates, and professionals seeking a clearer understanding of SSI's financial rules. No prior SSI knowledge is required.

Alyssa Wilbanks
Unbound Disability Claims, Inc.

Amanda McDonald
Unbound Disability Claims, Inc.



I Need a Trust for My Loved One: Who Do I Appoint to Serve?

Celebration 5
4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

You have met with your attorney to draft a trust for your loved one, but now you must decide who will manage the investments and/or administer the trust. This session will provide considerations for selecting a loved one to serve as trustee with a financial advisor, how to select a financial advisor, and how to evaluate a professional trustee. These topics will focus on the niche of financial planning and trust administration focused on serving those living with special needs and/or those with a history of substance abuse.

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Holistic Special Needs Financial Planning: Integrating Lifestyle, Law, and Finance

Celebration 6
4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

Navigating the financial future of a loved one with special needs requires more than just a savings account; it requires a specialized strategy that protects eligibility for essential programs like SSI and Medicaid while optimizing family wealth. In this session, we will demystify the “alphabet soup” of special needs planning. Attendees will gain a comprehensive understanding of the power of ABLE accounts, Special Needs Trusts, the Letter of Intent, and funding strategies. This presentation is designed to empower families with the technical knowledge of a CFA charter holder with the holistic perspective of a Chartered Special Needs Consultant.

Frank Aguilera
Aviance Capital Partners
2180 Immokalee Rd
Naples, FL 34110
(407) 801-0462
frank@aviancepartners.com



Helping Your Child Develop Independence

Celebration 7
4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

The presentation focuses on practical strategies for families to support preschool children in developing independence and self-care skills. Participants will learn how to foster skills in dressing, feeding, hygiene, and personal responsibility through everyday routines, modeling, and visual supports. The session emphasizes creating opportunities for independence, building confidence, and collaborating with caregivers and educators. Ideal for parents and caregivers of young children, especially those with disabilities, this session provides actionable tips to make daily routines a foundation for lifelong independence.

Melissa Gilliland
PESE

Bethany Bland
PESE

The ABCs of IEPs: Understanding IEPs and Advocating for Your Child or Self

Celebration 8

4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

“The ABCs of IEPs” is an informative and family-friendly presentation designed to help parents and caregivers understand the foundations of special education and the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process. Presented by educational advocate Terri George, this session breaks down complex special education concepts into clear, practical information families can use to meaningfully participate in their child’s education. The presentation reviews the three age-based categories of special education services, explains IEP timelines and team members, and outlines parental rights and responsibilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Families will gain an understanding of key IDEA principles such as FAPE, related services, assistive technology, and specially designed instruction, as well as how the IEP process continues after initial eligibility. Special attention is given to the importance of parent participation, effective communication with schools, transition services, and strategies for staying organized and informed. This presentation empowers families to be confident, collaborative members of the IEP team and strong advocates for their child’s educational needs. Participants will receive an organization tool to assist with record-keeping, which is especially important when applying for future benefits.

Terri Hargett-George

Special Education Solutions

2709 Art Museum Drive

Jacksonville, FL 32207

(904) 703-4102

terri@specialeducationsolutions.net



Guardianship, Advocacy, and Independence: Understanding Your Legal Options

Celebration 9

4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

When it comes to supporting a loved one with a disability, families often wonder: Will I need to become their guardian? What legal tools exist to protect them while still respecting their independence? In this session, we’ll break down the often-confusing world of guardianship, guardian advocacy, and alternative planning tools in a way that’s clear, practical, and empowering. We’ll explore the key differences between full guardianship and guardian advocacy in Florida, and discuss how powers of attorney, healthcare surrogate designations, and supported decision-making may offer less restrictive – but equally protective – alternatives. This session is ideal for parents, caregivers, self-advocates, and anyone seeking peace of mind about the future. Bring your questions! Whether you’re planning ahead for transition to adulthood, already navigating the court system, or simply trying to understand your options, this session will equip you with the knowledge you need to make informed, confident decisions.

Kimberly Soto

The Soto Law Office, P.A.

415 Montgomery Rd., Suite 111

Altamonte Springs, FL 32714

(321) 972-2279

ksoto@thesotolawoffice.com



Ready When It Matters: Simple Steps Families Can Take to Prepare for Emergencies

Celebration 10

4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

Emergencies can feel overwhelming, especially for families of children with special healthcare needs. This session focuses on simple, practical steps families can take to feel more prepared before a disaster occurs. Participants will learn to organize important information and plan for medical and sensory needs, which helps to reduce stress during emergencies. The session emphasizes practical strategies that fit into everyday life and empower families to take manageable steps toward preparedness and peace of mind.

Elizabeth M. Todak

The Power of Story: How Books Build Empathy, Inclusion, and Belonging

Celebration 12

4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

Stories shape how children see themselves and others. For families of children with disabilities – and for the providers who support them – books can be powerful tools for connection, communication, and belonging. This session explores how inclusive children’s literature can nurture empathy, celebrate neurodiversity, and create shared understanding. Participants will learn how to use books as conversation starters, emotional bridges, and tools for self-advocacy. We will highlight practical strategies for choosing inclusive books, adapting reading experiences for nonspeaking and sensory sensitive learners, and using stories to build stronger home, school, and faith community relationships. Attendees will leave with a curated list of inclusive titles, discussion prompts, and access to Sensory Friends’ national directory of sensory-friendly providers, churches, and community spaces.

Christine Goulbourne

Sensory Friends LLC

15985 Preserve Market Place Blvd

New Port Richey, FL 33556

(727) 946-1116

christine@sensoryfriends.com



From Waitlist to Workforce: Building Purpose When Traditional Paths Don't Fit

Celebration 13

4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

Families of teens and young adults with higher support needs often find themselves approaching adulthood without a clear path forward. Many are moving toward this next stage without a plan, limited access to services or funding, and little guidance on what to do next. This parent-led presentation shares lessons learned through building and leading community-based supports when traditional transition paths did not fit. Rather than offering a universal model, the session reflects on how paying attention to relationships, consistency, and small signs of interest helped guide meaningful next steps. Attendees will leave with a reframed understanding of readiness and encouragement to take small, purposeful steps forward.

Melissa Kramer

Growing Together Behavioral Center

1725 Art Museum Drive

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Advocacy in Action: Partnering to Create Meaningful Change!

Celebration 15
4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

Change happens when we become a united force. Partners in Policymaking is an advocacy & leadership training program funded by the Florida DD Council that teaches parents and self-advocates how to work with policymakers to improve the lives of persons with disabilities. Based on a national model, the Partners goal is to develop productive partnerships between the people who need services and those who create policy. This is related to education, housing, employment, finances, etc. If you want to learn how to become a leader in your community or improve your advocacy skills, Partners is for you!

Stacey Hoaglund
FDDC Partners in Policymaking



Perspectives from Advocating for 68 Years – The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly

Celebration 16
4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

I hope to encourage, perhaps inspire, attendees to become involved, or more involved, in advocating for accessibility, equity, and inclusion for people with disabilities by telling my story, from losing my leg from a shark attack at 8-years-old to involvement in political and governmental activities and non-governmental programs.

Douglas Lawton
2940 Bayhead Run
Oviedo, FL 32765
(407) 314-5378
djlawton@aol.com



Aspiring Young Leaders Rock n Roll Dance Party (Ages 15-30)

Manatee Spring II
4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

If you're a young leader who loves dancing, this session is made for you. Whether you're eager to hit the dance floor whenever you get the chance or just want to learn something new, we'll break down basic Zumba moves and create a Rock n Roll group choreography together. Becoming a Zumba Instructor could be an exciting part-time opportunity that's both enjoyable and rewarding. Many young people with disabilities have found their calling as Zumba instructors thanks to their love of dance and movement. This workshop will teach the essentials of becoming an instructor, help boost your confidence, and develop your leadership abilities. Don't miss out – come join the fun!

Paula Burns
Burns Dance & Fitness



Mesa Redonda sobre Autismo

Peacock Spring

4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

Conectarse con otras personas que realmente entienden tu recorrido puede transformar la manera en que enfrentas la vida como padre, madre, cuidador, joven o profesional que apoya a alguien dentro del espectro del autismo. Esta sesión interactiva te invita a participar en conversaciones significativas, intercambiar ideas prácticas y construir relaciones duraderas con personas que “te entienden”. Juntos exploraremos estrategias reales, la resiliencia emocional y el poder de las experiencias compartidas. Ya sea que estés comenzando tu camino o buscando nuevas formas de apoyar a tu ser querido, saldrás con esperanza renovada, herramientas útiles y conexiones que pueden marcar la diferencia.

Cindy Borroto

Maureen Morris

Women’s Well-being Workshop: Decluttering the Internal and External Spaces in Our Lives!

Rainbow Spring II

4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

This inspiring session for women will help raise your consciousness to become more aware of those issues or things that are taking up unnecessary space in your life. Do you ever feel crowded or cluttered inwardly in your thoughts, mind, and emotions, and outwardly in your physical spaces? Studies have shown that de-cluttering fosters better mental health. Come to this motivational workshop and receive the needed encouragement to create, improve, arrange, and organize those stress relieving spaces specifically designed to help you focus and be more mindful!! When this conference concludes and we return back to our homes, hopefully we will habitually be more determined than ever to thrive in such peaceful, harmonious, and clutter-free living spaces . . . heart, mind, and body!! Experience the joy, laughter, learning, caring, and sharing at this session. . . . Oh, and some surprises, too! :) See ya there!!

Malverna Streater

Team Streater Seminars and Services

3418 Dick Wilson Blvd, Unit 2323

Tallahassee, FL 32301

(850) 661-1202

malverna1@yahoo.com

5:30 pm to 6:00 pm

Performance by the Pyramid Players, Regency Rotunda

7:00 pm to 10:00 pm

Saturday Night Dance, Plaza Intl Ballroom



THE FAMILY
CAFÉ

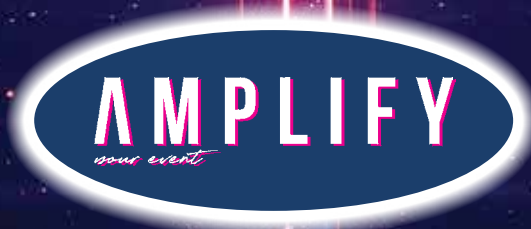


사랑해

SATURDAY NIGHT

DANCE PARTY

7-10 PM • PLAZA INTERNATIONAL BALLROOM



THE 2026 ANNUAL **FAMILY CAFÉ** "THE GREAT TWENTY-EIGHT" **ENTERTAINMENT** Highlights



KATERINA RANCANO

Plaza Intl Foyer
Saturday 12:00 pm to 12:30 pm

Katerina Rancano is a graduate of Stetson University and Longy School of Music with a Bachelor of Music Performance (Violin) and a Master of Music in Violin Performance. Her passion and specialty is opera pit orchestra. At the national level, she has performed with Itzhak Perlman at the Perlman Music Program Suncoast in Sarasota, Florida and internationally at the Beaumaris Festival in Wales. She is currently a member of the Alhambra Orchestra and also teaches violin and piano privately.



MILOSZ GASIOR

Regency Rotunda
Friday 6:00 pm to 6:30 pm

Milosz Gasior is a classically trained pianist with autism who is minimally verbal, yet communicates with extraordinary depth and emotion through music. Once facing significant developmental challenges and a diagnosis of severe autism, Milosz has transformed his life through the piano, using music as his voice and bridge to the world. Today, his performances move audiences beyond words. A graduate of the Pinellas County Center for the Arts, Milosz made history as the first piano major with autism. His volunteer work, performances at Moffitt Cancer Center in Tampa and Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital in St. Petersburg, Milosz brings peace to patients, families, and healthcare staff. Milosz will be joined by guest vocalist Hailey Buxton.



RADIANT VOICES

Regency Rotunda
Saturday 10:00 am to 10:30 am

Radiant Voices is a vibrant and inclusive choir composed of singers who experience mild to significant disabilities. The choir performs a wide variety of musical genres - from pop anthems to soulful ballads - so every voice is celebrated and empowered. Radiant Voices takes the stage in schools, community centers, and local events, sharing music that entertains and educates. Their performances spark meaningful conversations about accessibility and belonging. They show that people with disabilities are contributors and ambassadors of culture and connection. Radiant Voices' mission is to bridge gaps in understanding, dismantle barriers of prejudice, and encourage audiences to embrace diversity in their lives.



JOY STREET

Regency Bridge
Saturday 12:00 pm to 12:30 pm



Joy Street is a fully inclusive community choir making beautiful music, building lasting relationships, and spreading joy at community events and faith gatherings.

Joy Street is a part of Kairos Adventures, a multi-site arts and adventures program for adults living with disabilities. Headquartered in Sanford, Florida, Kairos currently offers classes in Altamonte Springs, Orlando, Sanford and online. Kairos' mission is to empower people with varying abilities to discover and develop their unique God-given potential and purpose.

ST. JOHN & FRIENDS


Plaza Intl Foyer
Friday 6:30 pm to 7:00 pm

St. John and Friends was formed in 2017, a musical group passionate about live music and the power of performance. We believe music can inspire and enlighten. St. John, who plays the cello, double bass, and piano, is a young man with intellectual differences who shares his voice through music. St. John is a graduate of the North Florida School of Special Education, a Special Olympics athlete and is now in his eighth season with the Jacksonville Symphony Youth Orchestras. Along with our two other group members (Christina Erhayel and David Steadman, both UNF Music School graduates), we perform jazz, contemporary and classical pieces in the community and outside of Jacksonville, Florida. stjohnandfriends.com. It is an honor for us to be performing for the attendees of the 28th Annual Family Cafe.



THE 2026 ANNUAL

FAMILY CAFÉ "THE GREAT TWENTY-EIGHT" ENTERTAINMENT Highlights



SUNWOLF DANCE PROJECT

Plaza Intl Foyer
 Sunday 10:00 am to 10:30 am

When two performers work together with very different abilities and styles of movement, the result can be beautiful and interesting. When those performers are Marjorie and Sun, they are deeply touching. They have been performing together professionally for over 6 years and have developed an ability to show the deepest passions that all people have within our hearts. Their dancing isn't just about THEM, it's about YOU, too! Marjorie and Sun dance together as cast members in Karen Peterson and Dancers, an inclusive dance company in Miami. Their ultimate goal of "inclusive dance" has led to them branching out and developing the "Sunwolf Dance Project."



PYRAMID PLAYERS

Regency Rotunda
 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, 11:30 am to 12:00 pm
 Saturday, 4:00 pm to 4:30 pm
 Saturday, 5:30 pm to 6:00 pm



Get ready to GROOVE with Pyramid at the 28th Annual Family Café! Enjoy high-energy performances from Pyramid's talented musicians and entertainers, featuring song-and-dance favorites by The Players and rockin' sets from the Electric People. These performers hone their skills 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. Don't miss the fun—come clap, dance and sing along! And be sure to stop by our exhibit hall gallery booth featuring works by Pyramid Artists!

THE SUPERSTARZ

Regency Rotunda
 Friday 1:00 pm to 1:30 pm



We are The Superstarz, a South Florida special needs cheer team and the only team from Florida in our division to qualify for the world's largest cheer competition. As

we prepare to take the stage at Worlds, we continue to train hard and represent our community with pride. Founded five years ago in honor of a beloved family member, our program provides a supportive and inclusive environment where athletes grow physically and emotionally. Everything we do is made possible through volunteer coaching and fundraising. More than a team, we are a family, showing that with belief and determination, anything is possible.

TREY KEESLING

Plaza Intl Foyer
 Friday 1:00 pm to 1:30 pm



Trey Keesling is an accomplished percussionist and dedicated community advocate based in Alachua County, Florida. A versatile musician, he has performed extensively as a jazz vibraphone soloist, notably featuring in the Autism in the Arts showcase sponsored by the University of Florida Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD). Beyond the stage, Mr. Keesling is a decorated athlete in Special Olympics Gymnastics. He is also deeply invested in service, frequently volunteering his time to support local community initiatives and his church. His work reflects a profound dedication to both the performing arts and the enrichment of the Gainesville community.

WINGS TO FLY DANCE COMPANY

Regency Rotunda
 Saturday 2:30 pm to 3:00 pm

Wings to Fly Dance Company is an inclusive nonprofit dance organization, founded in 2016, known for delivering powerful, emotionally resonant performances that inspire connection and community. With a seamless and expressive dance vocabulary, the company blends

artistic excellence with themes drawn from life, culture, and spirituality. Under the direction of Tasha, Tena, and Tara, each piece reflects a deep commitment to storytelling through movement, leaving lasting impressions on audiences. Now performing at The Family Cafe, Wings to Fly brings its signature passion and energy to a space centered on support, inclusion, and belonging.





SUNDAY

JUNE 14, 2026



DR. KEVIN SPENCER

10:30 am to 12:00 pm
Keynote Address
Plaza International Ballroom

Seamless Blend Of Artistry And Academia

Kevin Spencer, Ph.D., is an award-winning performing artist, author, educator, and researcher whose career seamlessly blends artistry with academia. For over 30 years, Spencer and his wife, Cindy, captivated audiences worldwide with one of the largest and most acclaimed theatrical illusion productions in the United States. Their exceptional contributions to the art of magic earned them numerous accolades, including the title of International Illusionists of the Year in 2009, six Performing Arts Entertainer of the Year awards, and the prestigious 2015 International Illusionists of the Year award from the Milbourne Christopher Foundation for their significant contributions to the field.

At the peak of his success, Dr. Spencer shifted from the grand stage to classrooms and hospitals worldwide, becoming the leading authority on the educational and therapeutic uses of simple magic tricks. His innovative work focuses on using magic to empower people with autism, developmental disabilities, intellectual challenges, emotional issues, and trauma backgrounds.

Dr. Spencer's research has been published in prestigious journals, including the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy (AJOT)* and *Journal of Learning Through the Arts (JLTA)*, and has been featured in prominent media outlets such as the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*, *The Washington Post*, *Taipei Times*, and *Chicago Tribune*. He has also appeared on major television programs, including the *CBS Early Show*, *Fox & Friends*, and international broadcasts like *CNN Türk* and *Saba Tümer* (Türkiye).

Recognized for his innovative work, Dr. Spencer was called "The Kid Whisperer" in *Inside Autism* (2013). He also received the 2024 Silver Anthem Award for Nonprofit Leader of the Year in Health. His therapeutic program, Magic Therapy, won the 2023 Gold Anthem Award for Best Innovation in Health, and his educational program, "Hocus Focus," received the 2022 Silver Anthem Award for Best Innovation in Education, Arts, and Culture.

Dr. Spencer holds several prestigious academic and advisory roles, including participating in the faculty of the Pediatric Sedation Outside the Operating Room conference sponsored by Harvard Medical School and Boston Children's Hospital. Additionally, he advises the U.S. Department of State as a subject matter expert on arts integration for special populations. He is an Approved Provider of Continuing Education for the American Occupational Therapy Association.

As both a scholar and an artist, Dr. Spencer provides sensory-inclusive performances for underserved communities and gives lectures worldwide on the educational and therapeutic benefits of magic. His unique expertise continues to inspire and change lives through the blend of art, education, and health.

- ***Dr. Spencer shifted from the grand stage to classrooms and hospitals worldwide, becoming the leading authority on the educational and therapeutic uses of simple magic tricks to empower people with autism and various disabilities.***



SUNDAY

JUNE 14, 2026

THE 28TH ANNUAL

FAMILY CAFÉ
JUNE 12-14



8:00 am to 9:00 am
 8:00 am to 9:00 am
 8:00 am to 12:00 pm
 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

Friends of Bill, Peacock Spring
 Everyone Can Zumba!, Regency Rotunda
 Club Cafe, Orlando L
 Duck Race, Grotto Pool
 Performance by Sunwolf Dance Project, Plaza Intl Foyer
Sunday Keynote - Dr. Kevin Spencer, Plaza Intl Ballroom
 Door Prizes, Plaza Intl Ballroom

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made: Celebrating God's Purpose in Every Ability

Rainbow Spring II
 8:00 am to 9:00 am

This faith-based presentation explores Psalm 139:14's truth that each person is "fearfully and wonderfully made" by God, regardless of ability. Through biblical examples like Moses, Jacob, and Paul, we'll see how God's strength shines through our weaknesses and how disability reflects the beautiful diversity of God's creation, not a flaw to fix. Participants will discover their inherent worth, unique calling, and the gifts they bring to the body of Christ, leaving with renewed confidence in their God-given purpose and belonging.



Rev. Robert E. Streater

Duck Race

Grotto Pool
 9:00 am to 10:00 am

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!

ACTIVITY ROOMS

"THE GREAT TWENTY-EIGHT"



ABLE United Enrollment Hub

Blue Spring II
 Friday 9:00 am to 6:00 pm
 Saturday 9:00 am to 6:00 pm



Have questions about ABLE accounts? Join us in Blue Spring II during the informative presentations, or stop in to get answers. 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. 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, and learn how you can get \$50 for opening a new ABLE United account today!

PS/RtI Technology and Learning Connections Hands-On Tech Expo

Manatee Spring I
 Friday 11:30 am to 6:00 pm
 Saturday 9:00 am to 6:00 pm



The PS/RtI Technology and Learning Connections Project is excited to offer an engaging, accessible, hands-on Technology Expo. Explore the power of play with various technologies involving kid-friendly activities and hands-on experiences that will make learning fun!



Henry's Friendly Sensory Farm

Orlando M
 Friday 9:30 am to 5:30 pm
 Saturday 9:30 am to 4:00 pm



Henry's Friendly Farm Sensory Playroom is a safe, sensory-rich 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.



Club Café

Orlando L
 Friday 10:00 am to 6:00 pm
 Saturday 8:00 am to 8:00 pm
 Sunday 8:00 am to 12:00 pm



Club Café, supported by Florida Community Care at The Annual Family Café, 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, Club Café features drop-in stations representing the Dimensions of Wellness, leadership activities, and fun, pro-social 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!

Florida Community Care Discovery Hub

Blue Spring 1
 Friday 10:00 am to 5:00 pm
 Saturday 10:00 am to 5:00 pm



Visit the FCC Discovery Hub at The 28th Annual Family Café for games, giveaways, and to learn more about us.

ACTIVITY ROOMS

"THE GREAT TWENTY-EIGHT"



Pawesome Spot

Columbia 37
 Friday 10:00 am to 6:00 pm
 Saturday 10:00 am to 6:00 pm



Come join our furbabies and get some much-needed hugs and high fives from our pawesome pups at the Pawesome Spot! Everyone is welcome! Come join our gated community! The front gate is only meant to keep our pups in the room.

Adapted Art Exploration

Orlando N
 Saturday 10:00 am to 3:00 pm

This session will have dance, music, and art throughout the day – stop by anytime for some fun and learning! Arts4All Florida is a non-profit statewide organization in Florida. The mission of Arts4All Florida is to provide, support, and champion arts education and cultural experiences for and by people with disabilities. Our vision is to create a world in which the arts are universally accessible.



Disability History Media Room

Coral Spring I
 Friday 11:30 am to 4:00 pm
 Saturday 9:00 am to 4:00 pm

Disability history is alive and unfolding! Drop into the Disability History Media Room for short films and archival clips, with a host who gets the conversation going after each one so you can talk through what stayed with you. Stay for a whole film or pop in between sessions. Then walk through the Florida Disability History Timeline in the foyer, where the story runs from 1817 to today, and share your thoughts on what comes next!



The Molina Healthcare Family Hub

Rainbow Spring I
 Friday 9:00 am to 6:00 pm
 Saturday 9:00 am to 6:00 pm

The Molina Healthcare Family Hub is a welcoming, family-friendly space to learn about Molina Healthcare and the Children's Medical Services (CMS) Plan. Families are invited to stop by, ask questions, explore benefits, and connect with our team for information designed to support people with special health care needs and their families.

Cafe Connections 30-50 Room

Columbia 35/36
 Friday 9:00 am to 6:00 pm
 Saturday 9:00 am to 6:00 pm



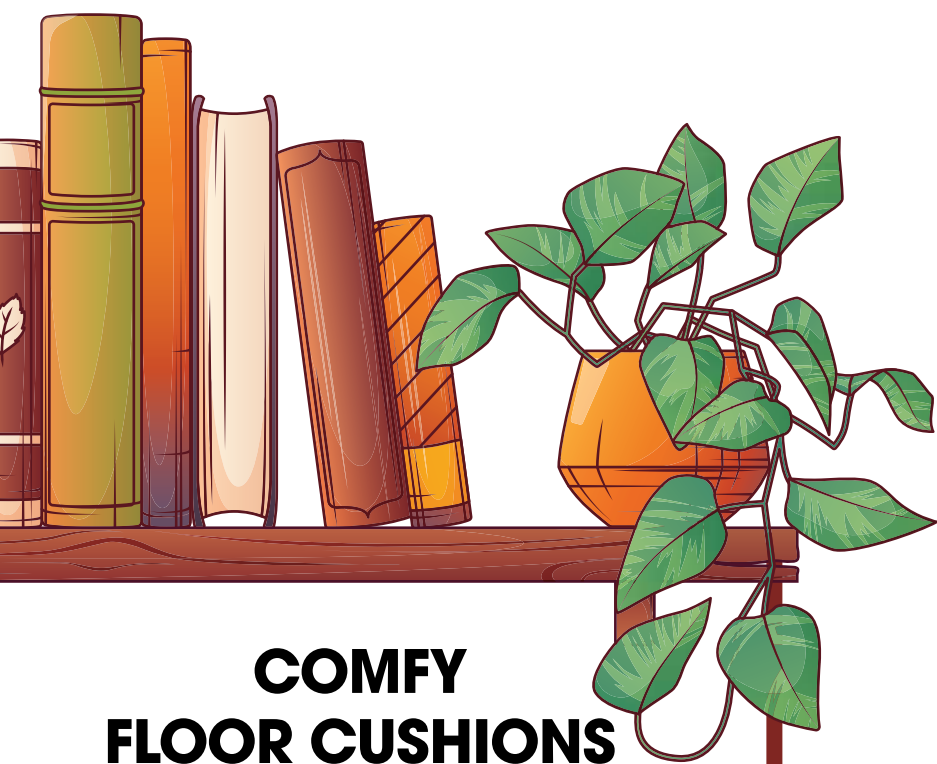
Adult self-advocates, come connect at Café Connections! The Café Connections room is the place for adults with disabilities, ages 30-50, to get together, brush up on life skills, explore resources, and network with each other!

Find info on essential topics like employment, meeting people, relationships, and financial literacy, socialize with music, make up, games, and arts & crafts, or come by just to relax, and maybe make some new friends



JOIN THE FAMILY CAFÉ'S VERY OWN AUTHORS

...in Regency Ballroom Q
as they read aloud from
their books.



**COMFY
FLOOR CUSHIONS
WILL BE PROVIDED**

BOOK FAIR

Book Readings
will take place from
9:00 to 6:00
on Friday, June 12
and from
9:00 to 5:00
on Saturday, June 13



**The
Family
Café**



The Florida Disability History Timeline

A collaboration between The Family Café & The Florida Youth Council

UPPER SPRINGS FOYER, LOBBY LEVEL

This glass panel exhibit walks visitors through 250 years of disability history in Florida and beyond, from the late 1700s to today. Across four eras and eight focus areas including law and policy, sports, arts and media, and Florida-specific milestones, the timeline traces how disabled people built a movement and shaped the world around them. Disabled people built this history, and Florida families have been part of it from the start. The walk ends at a hands-on table where visitors can hold movement objects, page through writing by disabled authors, experience how access has shaped our culture so far, and venture into a photo booth to celebrate how “History continues with us.”

MEDIA ROOM

Step inside for award-winning disability rights films by disabled storytellers. Films rotate throughout Friday and Saturday. Drop by and enjoy some popcorn and good discussion with our timeline hosts and volunteers.

Coral Spring I

Friday 11:30 am to 4:00 pm

Saturday 9:00 am to 4:00 pm





Columbia 35/36
9:00 am to 6:00 pm Friday
9:00 am to 6:00 pm Saturday



ADULT SELF-ADVOCATES, COME **CONNECT** AT **CAFÉ CONNECTIONS!**

The Café Connections room is the place for adults with disabilities, ages 30-50, to get together, brush up on life skills, explore resources, and network with each other!

Find info on essential topics like employment, meeting people, relationships, and financial literacy, socialize with music, make up, games, and arts & crafts, or come by just to relax, and maybe make some new friends.





CLUB CAFÉ

FOR YOUTH AGED 15-30 YEARS ONLY

FRIDAY 10 AM - 6 PM

SATURDAY 8 AM - 8 PM

SUNDAY 8 AM - 12 PM

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!



Florida
community care



**The
Family
Café**

INTRODUCING THE

RED CARPET EXPERIENCE

IN THE

Foyer of the Plaza International Ballroom

FRIDAY, JUNE 12TH

11:00 am to 11:30 am

1:00 pm to 1:30 pm

3:00 pm to 3:30 pm

4:30 pm to 5:00 pm

SATURDAY, JUNE 13TH

10:00 am to 10:30 am

2:30 pm to 3:00 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!"



Saturday
10:30 am to 11:30 am
Rainbow Spring II

Celebration of

LIFE

love never dies.

Paula Petry, PhD

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.

Paula Petry
paula@paulapetry.com

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.





SPORTSABILITY SAMPLER

PRESENTED BY SPORTSABILITY ALLIANCE

in partnership with:



SCHEDULE:

FRIDAY, JUNE 12 at 4:30pm

3:30-4:30pm: *New Technologies, Partnerships, and Opportunities for Recreation for People of ALL Abilities* in Coral Spring II

4:30pm: Gatorland Animal Show: Live Alligators & Crocodiles (gatorland.com)

SATURDAY, JUNE 13

11:30am: Gatorland Animal Show: Live Alligators & Crocodiles (gatorland.com)

2:30-5:00pm: Snorkeling and SCUBA Demonstration with Life Worth Leading (lifeworthleading.org) at **Grotto Pool**.

*Space is limited and registration is **required**. You **must** register in advance at Snorkeling and SCUBA booth in the SportsAbility Hall.*

ONGOING ACTIVITIES IN SPORTSABILITY HALL:

- Archery: FL Fish and Wildlife Commission (myfwc.com)
- Tennis: United States Tennis Association - Florida (usta.com)
- Track Chairs: EcoRover Chairs (ecoroverchairs.com)
- Axe Throwing: (removingthebarriers.org)

PARTNERS IN SPORTSABILITY HALL:

- Accessibility Outdoors Foundation (accessibilityoutdoors.org)
- Ann's Angels (annsangelsawf.org)
- Beach and Trail Accessibility Solutions (Jonesco)

www.sportsability.org



SUNDAY, JUNE 14 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 Friday and Saturday 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!



THE 19TH ANNUAL

YOUTH SUMMIT

JULY 31-AUGUST 1, 2026

**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 19th Annual
Youth Summit
From July 31 to
August 1 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 19th 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 will be plenty of opportunities for attendees to network, and share their thoughts, experiences, and aspirations.

The 19th Annual Youth Summit will be held at The Florida Hotel and Conference Center in Orlando **July 31 - August 1, 2026**. 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 \$124 per night.

**WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING
YOU IN ORLANDO IN JULY!**

FREE ONLINE REGISTRATION!
familycafe.net/register-for-the-annual-youth-summit/



Join the momentum!

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

FROM
Family Run Organization Movement
"Moving families forward. From our family to yours."





Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
Comprehensive Managed Care (ICMC) Program

Connecting adults with disabilities to care and support.

Get Started

- ✔ No application needed if you're already on Medicaid.
- ✔ Enroll at no cost.

You may be eligible if you:

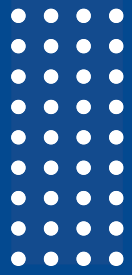
- ✔ Are 18 or older
- ✔ Have or are eligible for Florida Medicaid, and
 - ✔ Are on the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) pre-enrollment waitlist (including those currently in a Long-Term Care plan), or
 - ✔ Are enrolled in the iBudget Waiver and choose to switch to ICMC beginning 7/1/2026

ICMC Program Informational Session

Saturday, June 13 10:30 a.m.
Plaza International Ballroom



Florida Community Care does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability in covered health care programs and services. This information is available for free in other languages. Please contact our customer service number at 1.833.FCC.PLAN or TTY 711, Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm. Florida Community Care is a Managed Care Plan with a Florida Medicaid Contract. Esta información está disponible gratuitamente en otros idiomas y formatos. Comuníquese con nuestro Servicio al Cliente llamando al 1.833.322.7526. Si usa un TTY, marque 711. El horario de atención es de lunes a viernes de 8 a.m. a 8 p.m. Enfòmasyon sa a disponib gratis nan lòt lang. Tanpri kontakte nimevo sèvis manm nou an nan 1.833.FCC.PLAN. Si w ap itilize TTY, rele 711. Lendi jiska Vandredi, 8 a.m. – 8 p.m. Lê Ekstrèm. Thông tin này có sẵn miễn phí bằng các ngôn ngữ khác. Vui lòng liên hệ dịch vụ khách hàng của chúng tôi theo số 1.833.FCC.PLAN (1.833.322.7526, TDD/TTY 711) từ Thứ Hai đến Thứ Sáu, từ 8 giờ sáng đến 8 giờ tối. The benefit information provided is a brief summary, not a complete description of benefits. For more information contact FCC. Limitations, co-payments, and/or restrictions may apply. Benefits, formulary, pharmacy network, premium and/or co-payments/co-insurance may change. A health plan representative will be present with information. For accommodation of persons with special needs at marketing or enrollee educational events call 1.833.FCC.PLAN (1.833.322.7526, TDD/TTY 711)



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.





**DAN MARINO
FOUNDATION**

DAN MARINO CHANGED THE GAME ON AND OFF THE FIELD

**WITH AUTISM DIAGNOSES AT 1 IN 31, THE FUTURE
NEEDS CHAMPIONS. FANS KNOW WHAT
IT MEANS TO STAND BEHIND SOMETHING
BIGGER THAN THEMSELVES.**



**BE PART OF THE MISSION
WWW.DANMARINOFUNDATION.ORG**



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One Child at a Time**

Proud partner of the Family Café.

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Let's get social     Follow us @SunHealthFL



AAAPD

American Association of People with Disabilities

Register
Educate
Vote
Use your Power!

**REV
UP!**

We are a national disability led organization dedicated to building the economic and political power of the more than 70 million people with disabilities in the USA.

Disability Voting Rights Week
September 14 - 18

Connect with us



www.aapd.com

Wells Fargo is proud to sponsor The 28th Annual Family Cafe.

wellsfargo.com

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Disability Rights
FLORIDA

For More Information

800-342-0823

TDD 800-346-4127

www.DisabilityRightsFlorida.org



*Our services
are free and
confidential.*

**ADVOCACY
EQUALITY
DIGNITY**

Disability Rights Florida is a nonprofit organization that provides legal advocacy and rights protection for adults and children with a wide range of disabilities. Our staff attorneys, advocates and investigators address civil rights violations, abuse and neglect, and discrimination specifically in these areas:

- Discrimination in housing, architectural barriers, service animals, transportation, employment, and vocational rehabilitation
 - Access to public and private programs and services
 - Abuse, neglect, and rights violations in an institution, prison or jail
 - Rights to privacy, choice, dignity, and other basic human and civil rights
 - Barriers to a free and appropriate education
 - Access to individualized mental health and support services
 - Rights to effective and accessible communication
 - Investigation of stolen or misused funds, exploitation, or neglect by representative payees
 - Voting
 - Access to assistive technology
 - Supported Decision-Making
- If we cannot be of direct assistance, we refer people to other sources of help.**

The Urgency of Now – Ending Isolation by Creating Effective Community Ecosystems

37TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE



October 13-15, 2026

Pre-Conference: October 12, 2026

Hilton Lake Buena Vista
Disney World Resort, Orlando FL

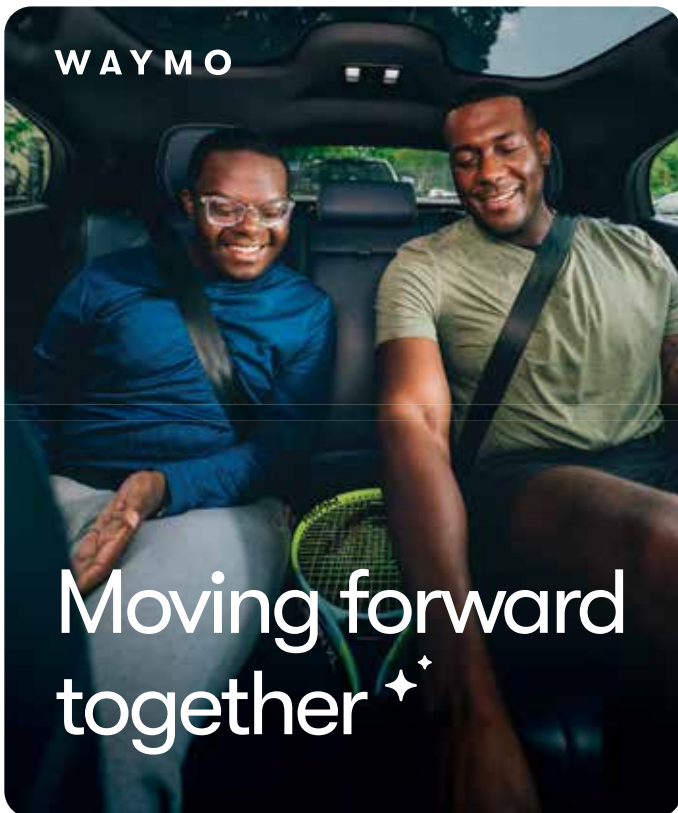


The National Federation of Families Conference brings together families, family leaders, family peer specialists, youth peers, advocates, researchers, and national leaders to confront the challenges ahead and strengthen the movement for community-based mental health and/or substance use support.

Register to Attend! Sponsorship and Exhibitor Opportunities Available!

www.fcmh.org/2026-conference

WAYMO



Moving forward
together ✨



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Designed around how the individual functions at home.

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The Step Up for Student's
Scholarship

Congratulations
Family Cafe
for 28 years of service to
the families of Florida!



We are Florida's #1 Disability Savings Program

Enroll by 6/30/26 using promo code **STRONG** to receive a \$50 account contribution.



ABLE United
ABLEUnited.com



BREAKTHROUGHS LLC

Medicaid Waiver Provider

Regions Served:
SUNCOAST
CENTRAL
NORTHEAST



ABOUT US

Breakthroughs LLC knows the Waiver can be confusing—and let's face it, sometimes discouraging. That's why we're here to help. We guide families, advocate for your needs, and support individuals with disabilities in building independence, including supported living in their own homes and meaningful community connection.



Breakthroughs are possible every day. Let us help you!

OUR SERVICES

- ✓ Personal Supports
- ✓ Supported Living Coaching
- ✓ Supported Employment
- ✓ Companion (LSD1)
- ✓ Respite

Contact Us Today

Office: 727-203-8009

admin@breakthroughsllc.org

WWW.BREAKTHROUGHSLLC.COM

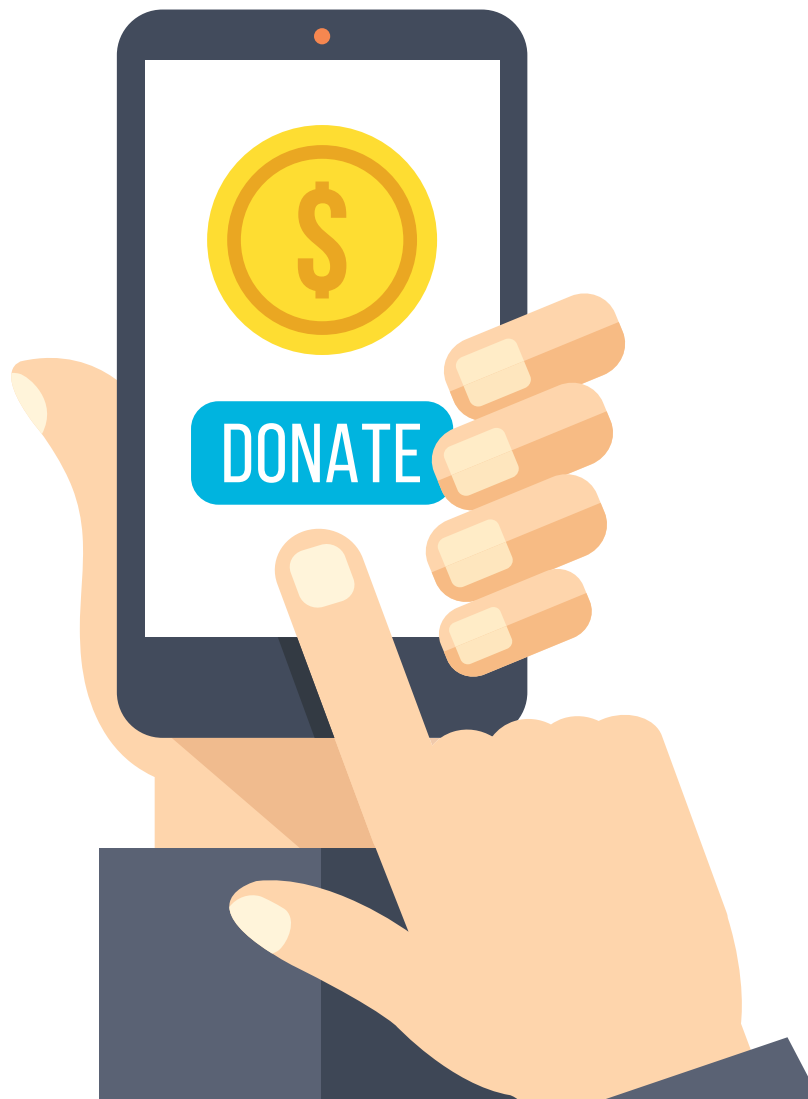
CONTRIBUTE TO



**...by making a
tax-deductible
donation today!**



Thank You!



The 28th Annual Family CAFÉ Conference Map

Services

- ASL Interpreters
- Coloring Station
- Family Cafe Merchandise
- Performance Area
- Red Carpet
- Disability History Timeline

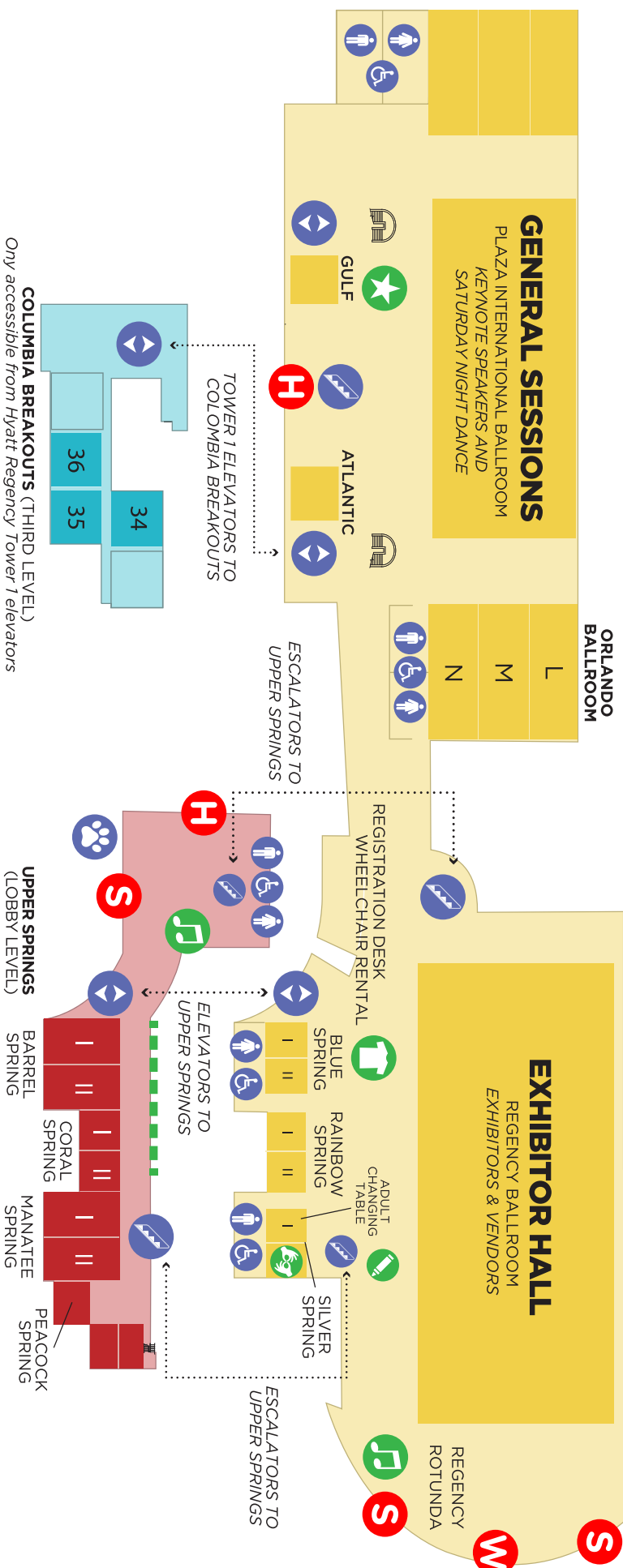
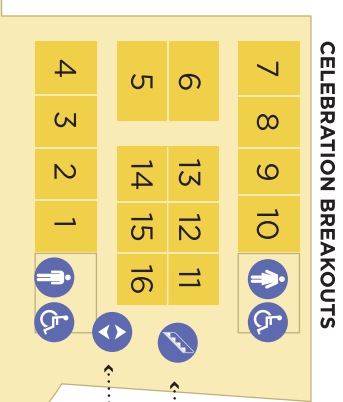
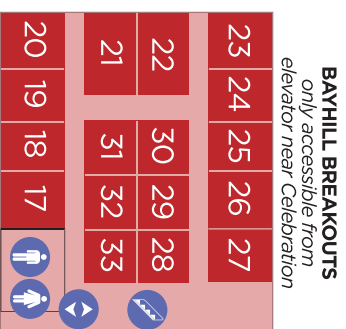
Amenities

- Elevator
- Escalator
- Men's Restroom
- Women's Restroom
- Wheelchair Accessible
- Dog Walk Area

Exits

- Exit to Hyatt Regency
- Exit to Skywalk
- Exit to Street

- Third Level
- Lobby Level
- Convention Level



Only accessible from Hyatt Regency Tower 1 elevators

ELEVATOR AND ESCALATOR TO BAYHILL BREAKOUTS

ESCALATORS TO UPPER SPRINGS

ELEVATORS TO UPPER SPRINGS

ESCALATORS TO UPPER SPRINGS

TOWER 1 ELEVATORS TO COLUMBIA BREAKOUTS

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Plan your schedule



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Engage with exhibitors and sponsors



Download presentation materials



Earn points for participating



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App Now



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Download the
App Now

You can also view the full agenda online at annual.familycafe.net/e/fc28/page/agenda

"SEE YOU NEXT YEAR!"

AT THE

29TH ANNUAL

FAMILY CAFÉ



**JUNE 18-20
2027**

**HYATT
REGENCY
ORLANDO**

**9801 INTERNATIONAL DR
ORLANDO, FL**

 Follow The Family Café on Facebook!

 Follow us on Instagram @TheFamilyCafeFL



**The
Family
Café**

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