2013 All Grantees Meeting
A Celebration of the Council’s Past, Present, & Future

The Pennsylvania Developmental Disability Council’s 2013 “All Grantees Meeting” took place the weekend of November 9th and 10th, 2013 in Harrisburg, PA. Representatives from organizations that received one or more grants through Council during the 2012-2016 state plan grant period were in attendance.

While celebrating Council’s past, present and future along with its 40th birthday, the planning committee also set out very distinct goals for the meeting:

- In order to facilitate networking and future collaboration, time was allotted for attendees to get to know one another and learn what they had in common.
- Grantees were given the opportunity to hear firsthand about other projects currently underway in Pennsylvania that benefit people with disabilities.
- The meeting provided current grantees with information on Council’s Mission, Vision and Values that will support them in the work of their current projects and prepare attendees for future Council-funded work.
- Additional guidance and understanding of current requirements for submitting proposals for Council was also provided to current Grantees.

The gathering began with Council’s very special guest and Keynote Speaker, Norman Kunc, M.Sc., a well-known advocate within the disability community for more than thirty years. Mr. Kunc kicked off the weekend with a session entitled “The Right to be Disabled.”

In addition, Mr. Kunc presented information in a breakout session entitled “Hell Bent on Helping.”

Friday evening was set aside to celebrate Council’s past with a panel discussion reflecting on the changes Council has experienced over the years, as well as things that have remained the same. The evening concluded with a celebration of Council's achievement, and of course, birthday cake.

Regarding the slideshow, one participant commented:

“What a wonderful opportunity to learn about the Council’s work and overarching philosophy and values.”

Saturday focused on the present, starting the day with a video slideshow highlighting the work of Council grantees that also served to introduce the grantees to each other and familiarize everyone present with the work of the individual projects. Regarding the slideshow one participant commented: “What a wonderful opportunity to learn about the Council’s work and overarching philosophy and values.”

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In addition to the general sessions held on Saturday, multiple breakout sessions were held throughout the weekend. Attendees were able to choose from a variety of sessions to attend, including:

- Council's 7 Statements of Values
- Facilitating Meaningful Self-Advocate Meeting Participation
- Council's Accessibility Arc
- Active Participation of People with Disabilities & Minorities
- Societal View on Disabilities & Relationships
- Cultural Competence
- Position Papers
- Fertilizing Council Seeds To Grow Into Trees

Jeff Parker, previous Council Chairperson, and Graham Muholland, Council Executive Director, brought a close to the presentations. They gave at the National Council's Conference on Disabilities (NACDD) in 2013 on the future of disability work and the importance of having people with disabilities lead the way.

Council's Accessibility Arc (Facilitated by Mary Kay Cunningham, Council Membe, Carl Marshall, Committee Member, and Kathy Gatts, Council Staff)

Past accessibility grantees shared stories about their community accessibility projects. The panel also explored the accessibility work still to be done by Council, how each grant could further this work, and what is still needed in communities so that everyone is able to fully access their community resources, businesses, programs and facilities.

Active Participation of People with Disabilities & Minorities (Facilitated by Amy Big, Council Vice Chairperson, Paul Kegler, Council Staff, and Lisa Stockfili, Council Member)

This session determined how projects have encouraged the active participation of people with disabilities in the work of Council and brain-stormed how to better accomplish the meeting of this Council requirement through the work of Council projects, and have a more meaningful outcome for minorities and people with disabilities.

Societal View on Disabilities & Relationships (Facilitated by Michelle Mitchell, M.Ed., CAC, Lehigh Carbon Community College, and Cindy Dunne, Council Member)

This session examined how much control society has over all whom we choose to spend time. This workshop used videos and pictures to frame the discussion on the impact of societal views on relationship choices.

Cultural Competence (Facilitated by Florence Reed, Council Member, Dana DeRose, Council Member, and Kathy Gatts, Council Staff)

This session considered the challenges faced by Council grantees and strategies they've implemented to further cultural competence in their projects. Participants were also encouraged to seek out possible collaborations among other projects that might facilitate cultural competence.

Fertilizing Council Seeds To Grow Into Trees (Facilitated by Dena Feinstein, Committee Member, Jane Mitchell, Committee Member, and Karen Reed, Council Staff)

This workshop explored the impact and importance of position papers. Participants discussed strategies to make position papers more relevant to the work of Council.

Facilitating Meaningful Self-Advocate Meeting Participation (Facilitated by Graham Muholland, Council Executive Director and David Goin, Council Staff)

This panel of self-advocates shared their struggles to participate in council and in meetings. They also discussed strategies to better support full participation on Council committees.

The breakout sessions were designed, not only to inform and educate participants, but also allowed attendees to get to know fellow grantees and discover commonalities. Incorporating networking opportunities was the priority of each session so that grantees would have the chance to learn about one another and uncover ways that they might be able to support each other in the future.
Mr. Kunc, who has cerebral palsy and attended a segregated school for students with physical disabilities until the age of 13, stated, "I finally figured out that I had the right to be disabled; and that I was under no obligation to anyone to minimize my disability."

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On the second day of the All Grantee Meeting, Mr. Kunc presented the session "Hell Bent on Helping." Of the session Mr. Kunc says, "The question is not how do we support people; but how do we support people in respectful ways." If people with disabilities are to become valued members of our society then, he says, they must be provided with dignified assistance and authentic relationships.

In this session, Kunc provided suggestions and ideas on providing respectful support to people with disabilities. For example:
- Distinguish help from friendship.
- Don't make friendship a big deal.
- Respect personal boundaries.
- Model respectful interactions.
- Encourage reciprocity and contribution.
- Merge help with respect, and
- Work from a premise of social justice.

Kunc urged all those present to reflect on and examine their "helping" actions with and for people with disabilities whom they support.

Dana Baccanti has recently joined the PADDCC as a Council member representing the PA Secretary of the Department of Labor.

What is your background and experience that you bring to the Council as it relates to people with disabilities?

Growing up, I spent a good deal of time with my maternal uncle, David, who suffered anoxia at birth which caused him to have Cerebral Palsy and other developmental disabilities. My relationship with him significantly shaped my life in every possible way. My grandmother and mother were his dedicated advocates and served as tremendous role models for me. Uncle David was not expected to live past adolescence but remained with us until the age of 53. His life expectancy was extended because of the evolution of civil rights for persons with disabilities and the expansion of services and funding available to him. I often wonder how different his life would be if he had been born 30 years later.

As a teenager, I volunteered at Camp Lutherlyn in western PA as a residential aid to spend time with my uncle and at Easter Seals in a pre-school for children with Autism. I was "job shadowing" and I didn't even realize it! Based upon those experiences, I attended The Pennsylvania State University and earned a B.S. in Special Education in 1992. After graduation, I worked as a substitute teacher in Special Education in Butler Area School District and as a residential aid at the Children's Rehabilitation Center in Saxonsburg, PA.

Prior to beginning my career at OVR, I worked as an academic instructor in an adult habilitation program at Easter Seals, now LifeSteps, in Butler, PA.

I have worked for the PA Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for 21 years. I have a significant amount of experience working with individuals who have suffered traumatic brain injuries, spinal cord injuries, strokes, and chronic pain. I have also been very involved with School to Work Transition. In 2003, I was promoted to VR Supervisor in the York District Office where I facilitated the local Consumer Advisory Committee and represented OVR on the Lancaster Transition Coordinating Council.

During this time, I earned a M.A. in Rehabilitation Counseling from The George Washington University. In 2006, I joined OVR's Central Office as the Chief of the Special Programs Division where I have been very involved with Interagency Collaboration, Transition, Social Security/Ticket to Work, Supported Employment, Veterans Programs, ID, Autism, HIV and Drug & Alcohol Services among others. I currently represent OVR on the Transition statewide Leadership Team and the Special Education Advisory Panel.

What do you look forward to regarding working as a member of the Council?

As OVR's representative on the Council, I am looking forward to working collaboratively with other members to promote projects and policies that will lead to "Employment First" in the Commonwealth. Employment is the path to economic self-sufficiency and independence for everyone; persons with disabilities are NOT excluded from this premise and should have every opportunity to achieve goals to that end. The opportunity to work with multiple stakeholders including persons with disabilities and their families will give me continued perspective to guide my work as a vocational rehabilitation professional that will help to shape policies and practices within the Commonwealth.

Can you share a few things about yourself personally?

I was born and raised in western Pennsylvania where my immediate family still resides in Butler, PA. As the eldest of three girls with a very athletic father, I have been involved with sports throughout my life and have been a lifelong supporter of all things Steelers, Penguins and Pirates. Currently, I reside in the middle of Allegheny farm country in Elizabethtown, Lancaster County, PA with my Shih Tzu, JacJac. I enjoy cooking, baking, traveling and spending time with my three nieces especially on our annual trip to Myrtle Beach, SC.

Welcome Dana!
NEW TO OUR STAFF:
An Interview with Erica Benning

Erica Benning has recently joined the PADD as a Grants Manager.

What is your new role on the staff and what will you be doing?
I will be working on grant processing (once a grantee is selected preparing the grant to send to grantee, after receiving grant back from grantee processing through the state system to get awarded), processing of renewals and no cost extensions. I will be preparing the long range budget as well as the fiscal breakdown of all money both federal and state. I will be tracking spending on all grants making sure that all grant money in each federal fiscal year is spent.

Additionally, each month I will be preparing the program officer reports and I will participate on the finance committee.

Where were you before coming to the Council?
Can you share a bit on your past work and education?
My previous position was at Penn State University at Hershey working as a financial manager with the Cancer Institute where I managed research grants, general funds, and gift funds. I was with Penn State University at Hershey for 10 years as a financial manager for different departments including Emergency Medicine, Neurology, and the Neuroscience Institute. I graduated from Penn State University with a degree in Finance.

Tell us a bit about yourself?
I was born and raised in the Harrisburg/Hershey area. I have one daughter who just turned 7 in April. I would say that spending time with her and being involved in her school and activities are my hobbies and interests. I guess as a parent your children become your greatest focus. I do also enjoy movies and going to concerts.

Welcome Erica!

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Video Library

The next time you are visiting our website, have a look at our “Video” section of resources. This section includes videos produced by the Council and also those produced through and with some of our grantees. A few of the videos you will find include:

PADD: AN INTRODUCTION TO OUR ORGANIZATION
This is a video describing the Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council (PADD). Please watch and learn about our mission, values, objectives and culture.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT
Public Service Announcement about the Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council; its vision and mission.

RIGHTS OF DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING PEOPLE — INTRODUCTION
This is the American Sign Language (ASL) video translation of the document, Deaf and Hard of Hearing People. It introduces six videos on the rights of deaf and hard of hearing people in different situations. The video was produced by the Disability Rights Network with funding from the Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council.

GUARDIANSHIP (OPEN CAPTIONED)
The Disability Rights Network of PA, with a grant from the PADD, has produced the video Guardianship, a question and answer video explaining what guardianship is, alternatives to guardianship, and other common issues related to guardianship.

BREAKING BARRIERS
Rompiendo Barreras (Breaking Barriers) is an intimate dialogue about disabilities as it affects Latino families. Moderated by members of the mental health team at Disability Rights Network of PA, in Part One two mothers and a provider discuss the barriers encountered in trying to find appropriate services for their children, the stigma associated with having a disability and the language associated with it, and the establishment of the support group Vocando Puertas (Calling on Doors).

Visit PADD.C.ORG/Videos/ to view these and many more!