



**Congressional Briefing  
Biographies of Presenters and Panelists  
July 15, 2010**

## Welcome to Autism Congress

### Lisa Goring\*

Lisa Goring is the National Director of Family Services at Autism Speaks. Lisa's focus is to provide direction and management of the Family Services program at Autism Speaks, and to serve as the guiding force behind the Family Services mission to provide information, tools, and resources to improve the lives of individuals and families affected by autism. Lisa's prior work experience includes a 19 year career at Saks Fifth Avenue where she was Vice President, Divisional Merchandise Manager. In addition, she is a past president of her local School Community Association, has participated on many special education committees, is a frequent parent member of the committee on special education in her school district, has presented at several autism conferences, and has worked as a teaching assistant at Nassau Suffolk Services for Autism's Martin C. Barell School. Lisa and her husband Paul have two children, one of whom has autism.

## Overview of Autism and AFAA

### Peter Bell\*

Peter Bell is executive vice president for programs and services at Autism Speaks. He oversees the foundation's government relations and family services activities and also serves as an advisor to the science division. Prior to his role at Autism Speaks, Bell was president and CEO of Cure Autism Now, which merged with Autism Speaks in February 2007. Peter joined Cure Autism Now in 2004 following a successful 12-year marketing career at McNeil Consumer & Specialty Pharmaceuticals, a member of the Johnson & Johnson family of companies. Peter led Cure Autism Now through a tremendous growth period and brought the foundation's funding total to more than \$39 million. In addition, Peter enhanced the foundation's research, education and outreach initiatives and expanded the foundation's treatment portfolio. Peter and his wife Liz have three children. Their eldest son Tyler has autism.

## AFAA National Agenda

### Denise Resnik\*

Denise is the co-founder of the Southwest Autism Research and Resource Center, which is dedicated to autism research, education and community outreach and the support of individuals with autism and their families throughout their lifetimes. She served as Board Chairman from 1997-2007 and now chairs its Board Development and Vocational & Life

Skills committees. Denise is also the founder and president of the strategic marketing and public relations agency, Denise Resnik & Associates. The agency has provided significant in-kind support to SARRC since its inception. Today, SARRC is an internationally recognized nonprofit organization dedicated to autism research, education and community outreach and the support of individuals with autism and their families throughout their lifetimes. Denise is the mother of an 18-year-old with autism.

## Stakeholder Panel

*Moderator:* Linda Walder Fiddle\*

Linda Walder Fiddle is the Founder and Executive Director of The Daniel Jordan Fiddle Foundation, a national autism organization focused on adults. The mission of the volunteer-run organization, named in memory of her son Danny, is to develop, advocate for and fund programs that create innovative ways for the diverse population of adults living with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) to participate in and contribute to community life. Ms. Walder Fiddle has been recognized by numerous organizations and national and state legislatures for her efforts in changing the face of autism to include adults. She is a member of the New Jersey Adults with Autism Task Force and currently serves as a member of the Advisory Boards of the Autism Center of New Jersey Medical School, Bergen County Community College Autism Center and Autism Family Services of New Jersey. Ms. Walder Fiddle is a frequent contributor to autism publications including *Autism Spectrum News* and *Autism Advocate* and has been featured in national media stories for her efforts. Linda is member of the Steering Committee of Advancing Futures for Adults with Autism, a national collaborative effort of autism organizations focusing on adult issues.

## Troy Cunningham

Troy M. Cunningham is 39 years old. He was diagnosed with infantile autism at the age of 2. As an adult, Troy participated in the St. John's Community Services Adult Rehabilitation Program and PSI Adult Day Program for 15 years. As a participant of the National Children's Center Adult Day Program, he received his first paying job last year and currently works 20 hours/week at Value Village Thrift Store. Troy's parents have worked with several other families to find a group living situation for their adult children with autism. On February 19, 2010, Troy moved to an Assisted Living home with two other young men who also have autism.

His mother Sondra K. Cunningham is the President of the DC Autism Society of America Chapter.

## Chris Murray

Chris Murray was born in New York City and is a 50 years old man who lives with autism. During his childhood years, very little was known about autism and it wasn't until a few years ago that Chris was officially diagnosed. At the age of 17, he began using construction paper to make models of cars and trucks that were in perfect scale and proportion but quite fragile. At age 19, Chris first asked for drawing materials. Thus began what became an almost all consuming interest in drawing and painting buildings

in extraordinary detail. Chris' artwork has been featured in art exhibitions and has been purchased by art collectors. Currently a resident of New Haven, Chris currently lives on his own, holds down two jobs and is proud of his participation in Special Olympics.

## Helen Murray

Helen Murray was born in New York City and is 55 years old; she is the sibling of Chris Murray. With the exception of a 20 year detour in Los Angeles, she has always considered New York her real home. She has spent virtually her entire career in the fashion business working for Calvin Klein, Vogue and Harper's Bazaar magazines. Most recently, she represented fashion and beauty photographers in Los Angeles. While able to hold her own in almost any conversation, she thinks she is nowhere near as interesting or accomplished as her brother Chris.

## Shelley Ourian

Shelley Ourian is 23 years old and resides in Long Island, NY. Shelley brings a unique personal understanding, as a person living with ASD, to her work as a teachers' aide at Nassau Suffolk Services for Autism. She is currently studying early childhood education at SUNY Suffolk. Shelley is the youngest person in her family, and has one older brother and one older sister. Some of her favorite hobbies include singing, dancing, listening to music, shopping, cooking, hanging with friends and family, reading books, and going to concerts.

## Joey Rosenbloom

Joseph William Rosenbloom (Joey) is a 22 year-old young man with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Joey uses an augmentative communication device to assist him in communicating. He is working to complete a college prep high school curriculum via a home school program and hopes to begin college classes in 2011. Joey attends an adult day program part time that gives him an opportunity to work and socialize with a group of young adults with developmental disabilities. A "news junkie", Joey is passionate about social justice and has developed emergency food packs called "Joe-Packs" for students living below the poverty level who are struggling in food insecure environments. Foremost, Joey is proud of being an advocate for those living with autism, demonstrating the possibility and potential in all individuals on the spectrum, particularly those with limited access to communication.

## Karl Wittig

Karl Wittig is 54 years old and was diagnosed at the age of 44 years with Asperger Syndrome. He worked as an electrical engineer doing research and development in the areas of electronics, computers, video, image processing, and communications for over 28 years, working for the research divisions of major electronics corporations. A member of two engineering honor societies (Tau Beta Pi and Eta Kappa Nu), he holds 19 U. S. patents, and is a registered professional engineer in the state of New York. As a young child, Karl was "obsessed" with virtually anything electrical or mechanical, which led to his choice of career. Although he had exhibited quite a few autistic traits both as a child and as an adult, and had suspected for a number of years that he might suffer from such a condition, he was not diagnosed until relatively late in life. Karl is committed to

increasing public awareness about the milder conditions of the autism spectrum disorder, especially Asperger Syndrome, and runs the New York Chapter of the Global and Regional Asperger Syndrome Partnership (GRASP), an advocacy organization serving individuals on the spectrum.

## Community Life Panel

*Moderator:* Peter Gerhardt\*

Dr. Peter Gerhardt is President and Chair of the Scientific Council for the Organization for Autism Research, a nonprofit organization dedicated to funding applied research and disseminating the relevant findings in support of learners with autism and their families. Dr. Gerhardt has over 30 years experience utilizing the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis in support of adolescents and adults with ASD in educational, employment, and community-based settings. He is the author or co-author of articles and book chapters on the needs of adults with ASD, the school-to-work transition process, assessment of social competence, and analysis and intervention of problematic behavior. He has presented nationally and internationally on these topics.

## Dennis Debbaudt

Dennis Debbaudt is the owner and founder of Autism Risk & Safety Management. A professional investigator and law enforcement trainer, Dennis has authored or co-authored over 25 articles and books including *Autism, Advocates and Law Enforcement Professionals: Recognizing and Reducing Risk Situations for People with Autism Spectrum Disorders*, and articles for the FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, and many other law enforcement and autism publications. He has developed training materials for the New York Police Department (NYPD), consulted and contributed to the Chicago Police Department's autism training block, is a cited Autism & Emergency Preparedness Subject Matter Resource at the Department of Homeland Security web site Lessons Learned Information Sharing, has consulted to ABC News 20/20 for a segment on autism and false confession, and is a member of the International Law Enforcement Educators and Trainers Association (ILEETA). Dennis is the proud father of Brad, a young man who has autism.

## Linda Meyer

Linda Meyer, Ed.D., MPA, BCBA-D, CPT is the Executive Director of Autism New Jersey and a consultant in private practice (Linda S. Meyer Consulting LLC). She is the co-founder of the Alpine Learning Group in Paramus, NJ and served as its founding executive director from 1989 until 2005. She serves on the professional advisory boards of several schools and agencies serving individuals with autism spectrum disorders. Linda has presented at regional, national, and international conferences, and authored articles and book chapters on various special education, nonprofit management, and personal fitness topics. She has taught doctoral and masters level students in educational and clinical psychology programs and is currently an adjunct professor at Caldwell College, in Caldwell, NJ. Linda is a member of the NJ Governor's Council for Research and Medical Treatment of Autism.

## Mary Beth Walsh

Mary Beth Walsh is the mother of an 11 year old child with autism. She currently serves as the Consumer Representative on the Board of the New Jersey Association for Behavior Analysis (NJABA) and has served on the Board of Directors of the Association for Science in Autism Treatment (ASAT). Holding a doctorate in theology from Union Seminary, she teaches graduate courses in pastoral ministry and advocates for the inclusion of individuals with autism in communities of faith. She is co-editor of the resource, *Journey into Community: Including Individuals with Autism in Faith Communities*.

## Patricia Wright\*

As Easter Seals National Director of Autism Services, Patricia leads autism programs for Easter Seals, one of the nation's largest providers of services for individual with autism across the lifespan. Patricia has a passion for education and advocacy and has dedicated her career to ensuring that individuals with autism are fully-included in society. Her personal mission is to offer the support that makes it possible for people with autism to lead meaningful, happy and productive lives.

## Employment Panel

### *Moderator:* Ilene Lainer\*

Ilene Lainer is a board member and Executive Director of the New York Center for Autism (NYCA) which she co-founded in 2003. In 2005, she co-founded NYCA Charter School which is the only charter school in NY state dedicated exclusively to serving children with a disability. Under her leadership, NYCA helped Hunter College open its Autism Training Center which provides education and training to graduate level professionals so they may become certified in applied behavior analysis and thereby better help children with autism and their families. In 2008, NYCA opened the Boost! after school programs in partnership with community organizations in New Jersey, Manhattan, and Long Island. NYCA, in partnership with NewYork-Presbyterian (NYP), along with its affiliated medical schools of Columbia and Weill Cornell, is opening the Institute for Brain Development to serve individuals and families, across their life span, living with autism and other developmental disorders of the brain. NYCA has future plans to develop partnerships that will create vocational training, employment opportunities, recreational and residential programs while simultaneously considering the importance of community integration, independence, and safety. Ilene Lainer practiced law for more than 20 years specializing in labor and employment on behalf of management. She and her husband have two boys, one of whom has autism.

## R. Speed Davis

Speed Davis is a Senior Policy Advisor at the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, where he is a member of the Workforce Systems Policy Team. He is providing leadership in the development of the customized employment concept, including oversight of ODEP's customized employment grantee and promoting self-employment and small business opportunities for people with disabilities. He

previously served as executive assistant to the chairperson and as acting executive director of the National Council on Disability (NCD) and Director of the Massachusetts Office on Disability. For almost 25 years, Speed has played a strong leadership role in advocacy activities on behalf of people with a wide range of disabilities. He has worked with public officials and private citizens to improve the status of people with disabilities in the areas of civil rights, physical and programmatic accessibility, employment, and transportation. Speed is a nationally recognized expert on housing rights of people with disabilities, and is well known for his expertise on the implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

## Erin Reihle

Erin Riehle, MSN, RN is a recognized authority and national leader in promoting employment opportunities for people with disabilities and other barriers to employment. She is a founder and Senior Director of Project SEARCH, an employment and transition program that has received national recognition for innovative practices pioneered under Ms. Riehle's guidance. Project SEARCH encompasses four programs, including the High School Transition Program, Adult Employment Program, Transition Clinic, and Education and Outreach focused on program replication and dissemination. She has served on many national committees, such as the Virginia Commonwealth University Business Leadership Roundtable and the Youth to Work Coalition. She is a board member for the United States Business Leadership Network and The Association for Persons in Supported Employment (APSE). Project SEARCH received the U.S. Department of Labor's 2004 New Freedom Initiative Award. Today, she is director of the Division of Disability Services at the Convalescent Hospital for Children, an affiliate of Cincinnati Children's.

## Deb Russell

Deb Russell is a Corporate Manager for Walgreen Co. She oversees the company's commitment to including qualified individuals with disabilities in the workforce of its distribution centers. Ms. Russell has advised and monitored these efforts in order to disseminate and share lessons that are learned throughout the Walgreen Company and other companies. Walgreen Company is the nation's largest drugstore chain and the 3rd largest of food and drug stores. Fortune Magazine ranks Walgreens as the 40th largest company in America and it employs over 230,000 people. Deb's background includes working in the field of employment of people with disabilities for more than 15 years.

## Joe Steffy

Joe Steffy is the sole owner of Poppin Joe's Kettle Korn. He is a 24 -year-old entrepreneur with multiple complex developmental disabilities, living in his own home in rural Kansas. Joe Steffy discovered his abilities against many odds. Joe's parents were supportive of Joe exploring his interests and to identify potential job opportunities. In 2005, Joe became the owner of Poppin Joe's Kettle Korn after he received support and grant funds from Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities, Social Security Administration, and Kansas Vocational Rehabilitation Services. Joe is involved with all the operations of the Kettle Korn business. He sets-up and takes down the equipment at all the outdoor events. He knows the popping process and has mastered all skills of the operation. Poppin Joe's Kettle Korn is licensed in the State of Kansas by the Department of Agriculture as a Processing Plant to manufacture and bag our products.

## Paul Wehman

Dr. Wehman is Professor of Physical Medicine with joint appointments in the Departments of Rehabilitation Counseling and also Special Education and Disability Policy at Virginia Commonwealth University. He serves as Chairman of the Division of Rehabilitation Research in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. Dr. Wehman has his Ph.D. in Behavioral Disabilities from University of Wisconsin-Madison. He helped to develop supported employment at VCU in the early 1980s and has published over 200 articles and authored or edited 40 books primarily in transition, severe disabilities, autism, traumatic brain injury and employment for persons with disabilities. Dr. Wehman was recognized as one of the 50 most influential special educators of the millennium by the *Remedial and Special Education* journal in December, 2000. He is also Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*.

## Housing Panel

*Moderator: Mardie Oakes\**

Mardie Oakes is the founding Executive Director of Hallmark Community Solutions (HCS), an organization that works at the intersection of finance, design, policy and community to create affordable housing for people with special needs. After earning her architecture degree from Rice University, she spent five years developing affordable housing and commercial buildings to revitalize the Fifth Ward, Houston's lowest income neighborhood. Mardie moved to the Bay Area in 2003 to become the Director of Real Estate Lending for Opportunity Fund (formerly Lenders for Community Development) where she invested \$20 million in lending capital in affordable housing and community facilities projects throughout Silicon Valley. Her organization served as the master developer for The Bay Area Housing Project, an ambitious public-private partnership which resulted in the development of community-integrated, service-rich housing for over 240 individuals with moderate-to-severe developmental disabilities in the Bay Area.

## George Bosworth

George Bosworth became the first Executive Director for the Urban Land Institute's Arizona District Council in April 2006. As Executive Director, George became the administrator in April 2008 for a grant from the Pivotal Foundation to research "Urban-Integrated Residential Development for Special Populations". One of the outcomes of the research was a collaborative report by the Urban Land Institute Arizona District Council, Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center, and Arizona State University entitled "*Opening Doors, A Discussion of Residential Options for Adults Living with Autism and Related Disorders*". Prior to his current position and beginning in 2001, George was the Chief Executive Officer and Asset Manager for Salt River Devco, an enterprise of the Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community which developed and managed commercial real estate for the Community. Prior to Salt River Devco, George was a Regional Manager for Equity Residential Trust, a NYSE real estate investment trust. From 1986 to 1997, George was a Vice President for Development for Evans Withycombe Residential Trust, a NYSE real estate investment trust, with responsibility for "for sale" and rental housing projects.

## Anna Hundley

Anna Hundley is the Executive Director of the Autism Treatment Centers of Texas, a position she has held since 1982. Anna has served as President of the National Association of Residential Providers for Adults with Autism (NARPAA) since 2002. In addition she serves as a Governor appointed member and the Vice Chair of the Texas Council on Autism and Pervasive Developmental Disorders. She is on the Advisory Task Force for Southwest Educational Development Laboratory which promotes employment development for adults with Autism; served on the US Department of Education 32<sup>nd</sup> Institute of Rehab Issues related to Autism; and recently was the guest editor for the October 2009 edition of the Autism Advocate, which focused on residential options for adults with autism. At the 41<sup>st</sup> National Autism Society Conference, Anna received the Audrey I. Horne Memorial Award, which is given annually to an individual who has made an enduring contribution to improving adult autism services.

## Fred Karnas

Fred Karnas joined the Obama administration in March of 2009 to serve as Senior Advisor to U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan. The primary focus of his work is on issues related to poverty and special needs populations. Along with a Health and Human Services counterpart, Fred provides leadership to the ground-breaking HUD-HHS partnership to better link housing, health and human services. Prior to joining HUD, Fred served in Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano's cabinet as director of the Department of Housing. In this role he oversaw the department's programs ranging from addressing homelessness to assisting first time homebuyers. He also served as executive director of the state Housing Finance Agency and co-chair of the Governor's Interagency and Community Council on Homelessness. Previously, Fred served at HUD in the Clinton Administration, initially as the first director of the Office of HIV/AIDS Housing, and subsequently as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Special Needs Programs and Acting Director of the federal Interagency Council on the Homeless.

## Cross-Cutting Panel

*Moderator: Cyndy Hayes\**

A strong advocate, Dr. Cyndy Hayes founded and serves as President of Aging with Autism, a non-profit organization serving the needs of individuals with autism who are most significantly challenged, providing support and services as they move to and through adulthood. She is also the founder and past President of Global Communities of Support and Reaching Potentials, both non profit organizations supporting individuals with autism and their families. She is a member of the AFAA steering committee and the honorary chair Professionally, Dr. Hayes is an organizational development consultant, specializing in strategic development and implementation and executive coaching and leadership development. She has three children; her youngest is nineteen and has autism.

### Ellen Blackwell

Ellen Blackwell is a health insurance specialist of the Division of Community and Institutional Services, Disabled and Elderly Health Programs Group, Center for Medicaid and State Operations, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services where she serves as an expert on policies that affect individuals with autism spectrum disorders.

### Tamar Heller

Tamar Heller, Ph.D., Professor, is Head of the Department of Disability and Human Development, University of Illinois at Chicago and director of its University Center of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities for the State of Illinois. She also directs the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Aging with Developmental Disabilities: Lifespan Health and Function and projects on family support and health promotion interventions for individuals with disabilities. Dr. Heller has written over 160 publications and presented numerous papers at major conferences on family support interventions and policies, self-determination, health promotion, and aging of people with developmental disabilities. She is the President of the board of the Association of University Centers on Disabilities. In 2005 she was a delegate to the White House Conference on Aging. As a co-founder of the national Sibling Leadership Network, she is a member of its steering committee.

### Nina Wall-Cote

Ms. Nina Wall-Coté is the Director for the Bureau of Autism Services, Office of Developmental Programs, Department of Public Welfare. She is a Licensed Social Worker who has worked in private practice with families and adolescents and has specialized as a private consultant for children with serious behavioral and emotional health challenges. Ms. Wall-Coté has served as an advocate for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and, as part of her clinical endeavors, has also trained and supervised clinicians who work with individuals living with ASD and serious behavioral health challenges.

## Georgia Winson\*

Georgia D. Winson M.S., LCPC is Chief Administrator of The Autism Program of Illinois, headquartered at The Hope Institute for Children and Families. The Autism Program of Illinois is a statewide program designed to develop and support the system of care for individuals with autism and their families. In this role, Ms. Winson has led regional and statewide forums to support consensus resulting in a network of 27 agencies and universities working in collaboration to increase access and quality of services. TAP of Illinois has been a leader in supporting the medical home model as a solution to many of the problems faced by the community. Prior to assuming an administrative role with TAP of Illinois, Ms. Winson was a faculty member at the Southern Illinois University School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry, Department of Developmental Disabilities where she provided psychotherapy, resident education, and supervision. She has also conducted SIU-SOM Grand Rounds, technical assistance and training for residential facilities and other providers for individuals with developmental disabilities, and numerous workshops on autism spectrum disorders and related topics.

\* Indicates an AFAA Steering Committee Member