ARSOBO’S NEW BUILDING PROVIDES BIGGER POSSIBILITIES

Burris “Duke” Duncan

A festive ceremony was held to celebrate the groundbreaking of ARSOBO’s new building in Nogales, Sonora on December 17, 2018. ARSOBO, short for the Arizona Sonora Border Projects for Inclusion, constructs special all-terrain wheelchairs and makes prosthetics. The devices are made by individuals who experience similar disabilities. ARSOBO also conducts hearing tests on adults and children and distributes hearing aids. Families are charged whatever they can afford for these medical devices with the remaining cost subsidized from grants and donations.

Both co-founders, Dr. Burris “Duke” Duncan and Francisco “Kiko” Trujillo spoke at the groundbreaking. They emphasized the palpable cross-border, community-wide support from government, the industrial sector, and the academic sector as well.

Left to right: Dr. Duke Duncan, DIF Director, and Kiko Trujillo celebrating the groundbreaking of the new building for ARSOBO in Nogales, Sonora, Mexico.
The new ARSOBO building received a $120,000 US Dollars (USD) investment from the program Proyecto Nogales; a program whose members include over twenty industrial factories that fund different social projects and non-profit organizations. Francisco Trujillo, Executive Director of ARSOBO, said he was thankful for the support the industrial community has shown over the last 10 years, a support that “creates a flutter that keeps our wings flying”.

In 2018, in the current, rent-free building, employees built 90 prosthetics, three times as many as in 2017. Owning a building with a larger work space will allow ARSOBO to increase production of prosthetics and wheelchairs, offer better services not only to Nogales, Sonora but to neighboring states, such as Sinaloa and Baja California. The expansion will also employ more personnel with disabilities.

The City of Nogales, Sonora donated the lot for the building and granted ARSOBO a $50,000 Mexican Pesos discount, almost equivalent to $2,590 USD on property taxes.

In addition to the $120,000 for the new building, Proyecto Nogales had previously invested $301,500 USD in ARSOBO. The City of Nogales, Sonora donated the lot for the building and granted ARSOBO a $50,000 Mexican Pesos discount, almost equivalent to $2,590 USD on property taxes.
not doing well as adults, having a hard time with employment, education, and health. It is estimated that 60% of youth 14 years and older in foster care have a disability or special health care needs (SHCN).

To fill the information gap and help youth navigate their way through the multiple systems to adulthood, the Sonoran UCEDD has partnered with the Arizona Department of Health Services, Bureau of Women’s and Children’s Health, Office of Children with Special Health Care Needs (OCSHCN) to conduct a needs assessment for foster youth with disabilities and SHCN.

The needs assessment will explore the needs and availability of services, supports and other assistance for these youth in their transition to adulthood across state and tribal child welfare agencies in Arizona. The project has four major objectives:

- Establish an Advisory Group.
- Conduct a review of current services and supports available to foster youth with disabilities/SCHN and those who age out of care in Arizona.
- Collect and analyze data particularly focusing on health care, education, employment, community and independent living, decision-making and legal rights.
- Share findings of the needs assessment through forums, reports, factsheets, and conference workshops.

Part of the data collection across Arizona will include a survey and focus groups in urban and rural areas for current and alumni foster youth with disabilities/SCHN, as well as the people who support them.

Through our survey and focus groups, we hope to gain their perspectives on the needs and concerns of foster youth with disabilities/SCHN. We will create maps of ideas from the communities of interest in Arizona guided by stakeholders, people with an interest or concern in foster youth with disabilities/SCHN. The resulting maps can be used to guide planning, programming and research efforts on the issues that matter to our stakeholders. We want to make sure that youth voice is included and featured throughout the needs assessment process and findings.

The goal of the project is to provide OCSHCN with a snapshot of the transition experience of foster youth with disabilities/SCHN in Arizona’s state and tribal child welfare agencies. The information will help OCSHCN in developing its next five-year strategic plan. Our project will identify needs and issues of importance to develop
a statewide agenda for serving foster youth with disabilities/SHCN in their transition to adult living and aging out of the child welfare system.

For more information or to get involved, contact:

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Jacy Farkas (left) and Melissa Kushner (right) presenting on the statewide project at the 2019 African American Conference on Disabilities, February 2019.

USING VIRTUAL TECHNOLOGY TO EXPAND EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Wendy Parent-Johnson

Rural states face unique challenges related to direct support workforce shortages. Access to job coaching and behavioral supports in rural areas is particularly challenging. To further, complicate the issue, states with pockets of urban, high population areas require different strategies in managing high caseloads. The use of technology provides opportunities to expand the reach of employment and behavioral supports. Creating virtual networks that support job coaches to provide quality services leads to successful employment outcomes.

A request often heard from job coaches is the need for technical assistance to address issues and questions they experience when they go out and implement what they learned in training. Geographic locations, size of provider organizations, or amount of dedicated resources allocated for supported employment services often translates to employment staff working in isolation. They have no one else around to brainstorm with, share ideas, or solve problems. The challenge is complicated by the push to serve individuals who have not been considered employable in the past. For example those who are enrolled in day and sheltered work programs, and who have high support needs. These cases raise even more questions as job coaches are out implementing supported employment services. Often, provider organizations only have one or two staff designated for employment. There is little opportunity for networking and

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support. The need to provide assistance in real time when the situation is occurring is clearly evident. As a result of these very real needs, an innovative response system is being developed. The system allows for an immediate question and answer while the job coach is experiencing it. This model of real-time technical assistance utilizes technology and telehealth modalities to “be in the moment in the same environment” and provide immediate guidance and support from a mentor.

Just in Time Employment Supports, funded by the Kessler Foundation, is a partnership of the University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities in Iowa, Nebraska and South Dakota, who have joined together to develop, implement, and evaluate the impact of virtual training and technical assistance. These services are delivered in real time to and for supported workers, their job coaches, and the businesses that employ them. Wendy Parent-Johnson, the co-director of the project and director of the Sonoran UCEDD, has worked with job coach participants in year one to design a texting strategy that will be replicated in year two and has significant application for Arizona.

A service model that impacts employment outcomes at less cost and greater efficiency will be of value to funders, providers, businesses and the supported workers. The project aims to identify sustainable and effective methods for the use of technology focused on supporting job placement and retention in both rural and urban settings.

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**MAPPING THE WAY FOR FUTURE PLANNING**

*Lynne Tomasa*

Lynne Tomasa has worked in the field of Aging her entire career and found planning for our futures to be one of the most difficult conversations to have. It is a natural and unavoidable issue in life. If we want a full life (however one defines that), we need to plan. Planning cannot be done alone because we have to share our plan. This is where people get stuck or delay their conversation.

The reality is that we all age, we all have different needs and
desires, and we need direction in finding answers and options. This is a big concern for everyone – individuals with disabilities, family members, professionals, service systems, and the broader community. We emphasize “process” because planning for our futures takes time, energy, focus, and resilience.

In 2016, Lynne interviewed 19 individuals with disabilities and 44 family caregivers. Through their stories, we started to create a long list of topics to cover in a planning roadmap. The original list of topics is very different from the final list. In the second year of this funded project, Melissa Kushner and Lynne Tomasa did two-hour trainings for families and support professionals. This was not long enough to really talk about the tough conversations, to practice how to approach the subject, and to start writing down one’s plan. We started to think about ways to share what we have learned from the people we interviewed. How can we continue the conversation about our futures in a practical and clear way? How can we simplify a complicated task?

Lynne felt there was a need for a Roadmap that felt like people were having a conversation about topics that were important when planning for the future. Someone or something had to encourage people to plan. Despite the available information, families were still struggling with planning. After several revisions, four chapters were developed. Each has a different focus but there are some overlaps. The goal is to facilitate communication by sharing ideas and writing things down.

Feedback from the community has been very positive. People seem to like the light and bright look and feel of the workbook. Lynne wanted it to reflect a positive, uplifting approach to planning despite it being a topic that can feel serious. It is a simple guide with plain and clear language.

Lynne is someone who is comfortable having difficult conversations. However, in her previous work in end of life care she saw that everyone digests information differently, we learn differently, and we deal with emotions differently. This means that information about important topics become more useful when it is broken down in plain language and in small chunks. We don’t want to plan when there is a crisis or an emergency.
centered approach, and provides guidelines on the steps that need to be taken. It is most helpful when wishes, choices, and plans are discussed together. The individual with a disability needs to be involved in every part of the plan. Don’t forget to address each person’s feelings – that is an important piece of the planning process.

The worksheets are a less threatening way to bring up sensitive topics. You can adapt the worksheets to fit your needs.

We would like to mention that the Roadmap would not be possible without the support and funding from the Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council. This allowed Lynne to collect information from surveys and interviews.

She talked with individuals with disabilities, families, and professionals in the community about why the planning process was difficult. Lynne blended her knowledge about aging, end of life, and future planning. Most important, she was trying to learn about what individuals and families found useful and what strategies were needed to support them through the planning process. This workbook represents the voices of our community.

The Roadmap is available on the Sonoran UCEDD website and the ADDPC website.

https://sonoranucedd.fcm.arizona.edu/publications/OurFuturesOurWishes

SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYMENT FOR MANY PROJECT SEARCH GRADUATES

Laura Schweers

Project SEARCH is an internationally recognized best-practices transition to work model for young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The model was founded in 1996 by Erin Riehle and Susie Rutkowski at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center and has since been replicated across the United States and abroad; currently there are over 450 sites.

In 2009, the Sonoran UCEDD, in collaboration with business, community, and state agencies, implemented the first Arizona Project SEARCH site at University Physicians Hospital, now Banner University Medical Center (UMC) South Campus, in Tucson. Since then it has partnered with school districts to develop additional sites.

Project SEARCH programs take place entirely within a host business where immersion in the workplace through intern rotations helps with the learning process. Interns receive feedback and guidance to obtain work
This employment training program focuses on competitive, integrated employment outcomes for all intern participants. Current Tucson sites include University of Arizona, Banner UMC Tucson Campus, and Banner UMC South Campus. Current Phoenix area sites include the Renaissance Glendale Hotel and Spa, Core-Mark distribution center, and a site implemented in fall of 2018 at Luke Airforce Base.

From years 2009 to 2016, Project SEARCH Arizona has trained 242 interns with 182 interns finding employment within a year after exiting their respective programs. This means 75% of participants reached the desired employment outcome. In 2016 alone, 79% of interns (47) found employment within a year.

Employed program graduates earn an average of $11.31 per hour and work an average of 26 hours per week. In comparison, in Arizona, individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities have an employment rate of 24% (Source: Association for Persons Supporting Employment First). Employed program graduates have worked and/or continue to work in a variety of businesses including Marriot University Park, University of Arizona (U of A) Catering, U of A Bear Down Kitchen, Starbucks, Trader Joe’s, Fry’s, Target, Patio Pools and Spas, Dimo Graphic Arts, different school districts, and many more.

**STAFF SPOTLIGHT**

**MEET JULIE ARMIN, PHD**

Describe your position: I’m an Assistant Professor in the Department of Family & Community Medicine and Faculty with the UCEDD. I primarily conduct community-based research focused on cancer and health equity.
As a child, did you imagine yourself working in your position? Absolutely not. I didn’t know such a job existed!

What is the best part of your job? Working with communities, and learning what’s important to them.

Tell me about your disability-related interests and why you are passionate about this topic: I am interested in improving cancer outcomes for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, which includes improving education and access to cancer screenings, treatment, and survivorship care. Much cancer research in collaboration with people with disabilities comes out of other countries, such as the United Kingdom (UK), so we need more work here in the US! Our health care system and our population is very different from that of the UK.

What is the most helpful advice you have received? It’s important that people with disabilities be meaningful collaborators in research.

What is one fun fact about you? I was introduced to yoga 30 years ago and I have had a regular practice for about 15 years. It has taught me to maintain focus and awareness of my thoughts and actions.

Anything else you want the community to know (e.g. upcoming presentations)? Tara Chico-Jarillo, one of the UCEDD’s Diversity Fellows, and I will be sharing research findings at this year’s American Association for Cancer Research Annual Meeting in late March 2019. She and I will be reporting on a project that aims to investigate the perception of and use of cancer screenings among Native American women with disabilities and their support people. My co-leader on the project is Heather Williamson DrPH at NAU.

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**ANNOUNCEMENTS & EVENTS**

- The Native American Cancer Prevention (NACP) Project is recruiting participants for a study on cancer screenings and Native American women with an intellectual or developmental disability. To sign up and for more project information, view the flyer: [https://tinyurl.com/y5uvhr6t](https://tinyurl.com/y5uvhr6t)

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**Do you want to talk about breast or cervical cancer screenings?**

- Project SEARCH is still accepting applications for the Banner UMC Tucson Campus-Young Adult Program. Application instructions can be found at [https://tinyurl.com/y49ctfmm](https://tinyurl.com/y49ctfmm)
• Join ArtWorks for an opening reception to a collaborative art show, DREAMS, with our friends at Hozhoni Foundation; an exhibit about goals, dreaming and imagination. Opening reception is Friday, April 12th 1:00-3:00PM. We hope to see you there! Show details are available at https://tinyurl.com/yxb6ko6e

• Visit the Sonoran UCEDD’s booth at the Autism Walk and Resource Fair Saturday April 6, 2019. More information can be found at https://tinyurl.com/y2p8bry7