

# DDD Today

A Publication of the Division of Developmental Disabilities

Chris Christie, Governor  
Kim Guadagno, Lt. Governor

Volume V, Issue III June 2011  
dddnewsletter@dhs.state.nj.us

Jennifer Velez, Commissioner  
Dawn Apgar, Deputy Commissioner

Today's Quotes: "(Life) is about finding a way to turn a bad situation into a good situation, even if it's by smiling every day even when you don't feel like it," *Jose Rene Martinez (born June 14, 1983) is an American actor, spokesman and soldier (retired)*

## NJ SELF-DIRECTED SUPPORTS CONFERENCE A SUCCESS

The NJ Department of Human Services in collaboration with the NJ Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) successfully held its second annual NJ Self-Directed Supports Conference on Friday, May 20 and Saturday, May 21. The event featured a variety of special presentations and workshops designed to help attendees learn about and share experiences related to self-direction.

The two-day event was held at the Doubletree Hotel in Somerset, NJ and was geared towards consumers and families as well as providers who are interested in self-direction services.

DDD defines their Self-Directed Services program as a system of self-directed supports that gives consumers and their families the power to choose how the consumer lives, the supports that he/she receives, who will provide the services, and when the services will be provided. In essence, the supports offered provide a means by which individuals are empowered to gain control over the selection of services and supports that meet their own needs.

Throughout the weekend, conference participants selected

from 10 different workshops to attend, including:

- Planning for Housing
- The Value of Work
- Being a Healthy Adult: How to Advocate for Your Health and Health Care
- Choice and Risk: Finding the Balance



**Disability rights advocate Johnnie Tuitel is this year's keynote speaker.**

"We were very excited about this year's conference! It was a fun-filled event at which people learned about self-direction and the decisions that go along with

the entire process. It also provided an opportunity for individuals purchasing support, family members, provider agencies, and anyone else who has an interest in self-direction to network and gain knowledge about the world of self-directed supports and services," said Katherine Crawford, conference chair from DDD.

### **KEYNOTE SPEAKER:**

On Saturday, the keynote presentation was given by disability rights advocate Johnnie Tuitel.

Referring to himself as "America's Pioneer Handicapitalist," Tuitel said the phrase is about focusing on his abilities and opportunities. As a philanthropist, he founded the charity Alternatives in Motion in the early 90s to provide wheelchairs to the uninsured. He is also President of Tap Shoe Productions in Grand Rapids, MI.

Moreover, as an award winning children's author and storyteller, Tuitel is known as the "very best author at inspiring kids to read and write." He encourages children to "Join in the Adventure of Life." His school visits plant the seeds that create the climate of "inclusion" everywhere he visits.

## STATE OFFICIALS CELEBRATE AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH

### First Lady Mary Pat Christie and State Health and Human Services Officials Unveil New Resources to Help Families Affected by Autism



*First Lady Mary Pat Christie is greeted by 4-year old Brooklyn Greene, a patient of Children's Specialized Hospital in New Brunswick, diagnosed with autism.*

#### Office on Autism Launches New Website

<http://www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/home/ooa.html>

First Lady Mary Pat Christie joined the Commissioners of the Departments of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) and Human Services (DHS) to unveil two new State resources available to assist families faced with the diagnosis of autism. The initiatives, a guide entitled *Autism, Navigating through the Maze* and its accompanying website, were officially launched at a statewide conference held at the PSE&G Children's Specialized Hospital in New Brunswick.

"Throughout my travels this past April, I had an opportunity to meet and speak with many families of children and young adults with autism," said Mrs. Christie. "In these discussions, there has been a common vision -- that as parents, we all want the best possible outcomes for our children so that they have the greatest opportunities that lead to productive and satisfying lives.

"The tools being launched today bring New Jersey another step closer to helping families impacted by autism fulfill those goals. I applaud Commissioner Velez and Acting Commissioner O'Dowd and their staff for the work they are doing to make a difference for this community."

The new guide and website provide a foundation of information about services, resources and support available to New Jersey families facing the challenges of autism and other developmental disabilities. Web links to a variety of relevant community-based agencies in the Garden State providing assistance are also included.

A reported 1 in 94 New Jersey children is diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) – one of the highest prevalence rates in the nation.

*(Continued on page 9)*

## Community News

This past December, DDD consumer Jesse Walker was able to achieve one of his life-long goals when his play *Farbissen* was performed at the Jackson Branch of Ocean County Library.

Walker, who resides in Westlake and has cerebral palsy, said the play is a Jewish version of "A Christmas Carol." "During the play, which begins on the night before Hanukkah in London in the 1830s, *Farbissen* is visited by the ghost of his now deceased business partner, Mendelson, who tells him he is going to be visited by three spirits that night - the ghosts of Hanukkah past, present, and future.

Walker also directed the play and performed in it. "I love acting and directing," Walker said. "I can choreograph. I do the writing. I do costumes. I do it all. I even do sounds effects and pyrotechnics."

*Farbissen* was so well received that the show sold out and those on the waiting list were invited to attend the dress rehearsal. It also earned accolades in an article in the *Westlake News*.

Currently, Walker, who is 25 years old, is utilizing funds from DDD's Self-Directed Day Services budget to work on his life-long dream of being in the theater business. He does most of the fundraising, directing, and producing of his plays and planned to put on his next play at Westlake Golf and Country Club on Saturday, May 27.

## News from Our Developmental Centers

### Dream-like Experience for WDC Tornadoes

The Temple basketball season for our Woodbine Developmental Center (WDC) guys was the dream-like double-header games on February 17, 2011, at the Liacouras Center.

In the first game on the Liacouras Center hardwood, the WDC Tornadoes challenged the Cape May County Special Services Cougars in the annual Cape May County Championship Game.

Our Tornadoes were cheered on by their coaches, staff, family members, and even the Temple players and staff. It was priceless to watch the reactions and facial expressions of the players on both teams as the arena lighting came on full force, and the four-sided scoreboard, public address system, and time clocks were activated. Then, the official Temple referees appeared in full uniform to start the game.

All players on both teams were recognized and cheered individually as they were introduced over the public address system at the start of the game. However, after a nip-and-tuck battle during the 40-minute game, the Special Services Cougars prevailed in the last two minutes of action to garner a hard fought 42 - 36 victory. Both teams displayed much improved skills and teamwork, and sportsmanship was definitely evident.

At the conclusion of the contest, the Tornadoes and Cougar players and coaches joined Temple Athletics Director Bill Bradshaw at mid-court for the traditional exchanges of congratulatory hand-

shakes and the presentation of the Matt Thomas Memorial Traveling Tournament Trophy.



Bradshaw was a spectator at the game, and he expressed his pleasure individually to all players on both teams regarding their improved playing skills and teamwork. As a result, Bradshaw invited both teams to return to the Liacouras Center next year for the annual Cape May County Championship Game.

Following this presentation ceremony, both teams dined together for a celebratory dinner at the Draught Horse Restaurant in the Liacouras Center complex. We all mingled with the incoming Temple alumni and fans arriving for that evening's Division I Men's Basketball Game between the nationally-ranked Temple Owls and the Richmond University Spiders.

Excitement and electricity were in the air during the dinner celebration. Following dinner, both teams returned to the Liacouras Center to cheer on Temple to a 73-53 win over Richmond before an almost capacity crowd.

The WDC group departed for home tired but proud of their excellent performances as both basketball players and fans during an exceptional opportunity to

participate actively in an electrifying Division I collegiate basketball environment.



Thanks to the tremendous cooperation and support of Temple's Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, our WDC traveling group enjoyed an invitation-only buffet luncheon with the Owl Club members in the Fox-Gittis dining room in the Liacouras Center prior to watching Temple's game against St. Joseph's University on Sunday, February 20, 2011. These festivities were in conjunction with the annual Owl Club Auction, and our WDC men took advantage of the opportunity to renew acquaintances with many Owl Club members as well as Athletics Department staff. A great time was had by all.

*Submitted by:  
Dr. Edward Mahaney,  
Administration*

## NJ SELF-DIRECTED SUPPORTS CONFERENCE A SUCCESS (Continued from page 1)

As a motivational speaker, he inspires life-long community service, and he mentors great leaders and great team members. Tuitel also uses his life to teach about diversity and “disability awareness” in a personalized and humorous way.

In October 2010, Tuitel was the subject of worldwide news when US Airways removed him from

an airplane, deeming him “too disabled to fly.” Tuitel has used that as a teaching moment and incorporates the details into his presentations so others can learn from that astonishing event.

Notably, Tuitel received the 2003 Hope College, distinguished Alumni Award and he received a community service award from

President Gerald R. Ford. His fourth book, “Searching the Noonday Trail” was honored by IBBY (International Board on Books for Young People).

Tuitel’s attitude and humor are inspirational. He will change your perception on disability for the better. 

### FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

Several fun activities took place over the course of the conference. On Friday afternoon, an interactive session titled ***The Vision Decision: Developing a Shared Vision for Self-Direction in New Jersey*** was held in the World Café.

On Friday evening, attendees viewed **The Gillian Film**. The film follows the life of 22 year old Gillian, daughter of Joanne Hershfield, who is a woman with developmental disabilities. Gillian lives in her own apartment and works at a local veterinary clinic and horseback riding farm. “Through an examination of one exceptional life, I explore how we might transform our understanding of the meaning and worth of any individual life,” Hershfield remarks.

The **Gillian Film** has been screened at numerous film festivals in the US and abroad, and the DVD has been purchased by over one hundred educational institutions as well as agencies that work with people with disabilities.

That evening, there was also a semi-formal dinner dance on-site. Everyone enjoyed the music and the buffet dinner.

### SATURDAY HIGHLIGHTS

Festivities continued on Saturday with a daylong Art and Music Show.

### ART SHOW DETAILS

For the Art Show, categories included but were not limited to painting, photos, crafts, ceramics, drawing, jewelry, needlework, and sculpture. If you made it, we displayed it!

### MUSIC SHOW DETAILS

In addition to the art show, there was an opportunity for people who are self-directing to showcase their musical talents. Each performer or group was provided a time to showcase their musical talent on Saturday in the Mirabelle Ballroom. Each performer was allotted a 15 minute time slot.

**AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH**

**THROUGHOUT THE MONTH OF APRIL,  
STAFF FROM THE DIVISION OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES  
PROUDLY RECOGNIZED AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH**

***Autism  
Awareness  
Month***



**LOCAL AUTISM SPECIFIC RESOURCE ORGANIZATIONS**

**Autism Speaks  
New Jersey  
Regional Office**

Phone: 609-228-7315

Local office of the nation's largest autism science and advocacy organization.

**New Horizons in  
Autism, Inc.**

Neptune City: 732-918-0850  
Toms River: 732-341-1661  
Dayton: 732-438-0215

Provides advocacy, technical assistance, and community based services and support.

**Verbal Behavior Institute**

Phone: 732-254-0300

Offers training and workshops for parents, teachers, and therapists.

**POAC (Parents Of  
Autistic Children)**

Phone: 888-460-7622

Provides training, services, outreach, and support.

**Autism Family Times with  
Brianna, Inc.**

Phone: 908-889-8860

The non-profit provides customized, therapeutic, educational, and recreational programs for autistic children and their immediate family members.

**Office on Autism  
Launches  
New Website**

[http://www.nj.gov/human\\_services/ddd/home/ooa.html](http://www.nj.gov/human_services/ddd/home/ooa.html)



## NFL PLAYER'S FOUNDATION SUPPORTS NJ FAMILIES AFFECTED BY AUTISM

When he's not on the field striving to make it to the next Super Bowl, Miami Dolphins tight end Anthony Fasano spends much of his time raising funds to support New Jersey families affected by autism through his non-profit organization, The Anthony Fasano Foundation.

"A lot of athletes have sons and daughters with autism," Fasano said "It's an issue fairly close to their hearts."

Fasano, 26, hails from Verona, New Jersey and decided he wanted to give back to the community after being signed by the NFL. At that time, "Anthony discussed helping children with autism, which has become very common with children in New Jersey," said Pat Capra, who serves as director of the foundation as well as president of Lunar Sports Group.

According to data provided by the foundation, 1 in every 94 children living in New Jersey has autism. Among them, more boys (1 in 60) have it than girls. Nationwide, the numbers are not quite as high, as 1 in 150 children have autism. "The numbers are so much higher in the tri-state area," Fasano remarked.

Throughout the year, the foundation hosts various fundraisers in support of the Reed Academy, which is a private, not-for-profit school program in Garfield, NJ for individuals with autism spectrum disorder between the ages of 3-21. The Academy also provides family consultation services and parent training.



*Anthony Fasano during a game*

Capra said he suggested selecting the Reed Academy as a beneficiary since he had met one of the program's founding families (The Sluka family) a couple years earlier. "It was the first time that I had been introduced to autism and the devastating impact it has on entire families," Capra said, adding, "Anthony wanted to help support their efforts and ensure these kids would lead happy and fulfilling lives."

Currently, proceeds from their fundraisers are being used to help cover the costs of constructing the Reed Academy's new campus. Previously, students were taught in a church basement, Fasano said. "I got to visit the Reed Academy and meet with students and their families. They are just so grateful."

In the future, Fasano plans to expand the foundation so he can

also benefit other groups in need. In doing so, Fasano hopes he can broaden his horizons and touch more lives.

To learn more about The Anthony Fasano Foundation, visit: <http://anthonyfasanofoundation.com/>



## ANNOUNCEMENTS



*Dare to Dream*  
*Student Leadership*

### **DARE TO DREAM IN 2011 HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE**

The Office of Special Education Programs is sponsoring 6 regional “Dare to Dream” Student Leadership conferences that highlight the importance of student self-advocacy and leadership. Each conference features presentations from accomplished students and adults with disabilities who have demonstrated exemplary self-advocacy and leadership skills.

Additionally, the conference program includes a variety of concurrent breakout sessions that provide conference attendees opportunities to gain insight into the transition and self-advocacy process. Students will also participate in workshops led by their peers who are developing their own self-advocacy and leadership skills. Parents are welcome to attend with their district or on their own.

Workshop topics will include: goal setting; self-discovery; student self-advocacy; and planning your future. The Student Leadership conferences have long been a positive and empowering experience for thousands of New Jersey’s students.

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**Contact Bob Haugh, of the Office of Special Education Programs,  
for more information  
via e-mail at: [Robert.haugh@doe.state.nj.us](mailto:Robert.haugh@doe.state.nj.us)**

## ANNOUNCEMENTS



### ALL ABOUT AUTISM

## SEMINAR SERIES FOR CAREGIVERS AND PROFESSIONALS

Autism workshops geared for parents and professionals working with children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder will be offered at the new, state-of-the-art CNNH building in Gibbsboro, New Jersey. Each month, a different aspect of autism will be explored, with CNNH expert clinicians offering skills and strategies to use in interacting with individuals with autism.

Anyone interested in the topic is welcome to attend. However, we do request advance notice in order to accommodate everyone. Call (856) 346-0005, ext. 3021 to make your reservation.

### MEDICATION MANAGEMENT FOR AUTISM

**June 9 from 10:00 to 11:30 AM** With so many medications offered for individuals with autism, it can be daunting to determine which is the best fit for each individual. This workshop will give an overview of the medications currently available for treating individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders and how to properly administer them.

*Presented by: Mark Mintz, M.D. and Lisa Alberts, PMHNP-BC*

### STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE ACADEMIC SUCCESS FOR STUDENTS WITH HIGH FUNCTIONING AUTISM & ASPERGER DISORDER

**October 13 from 5:00 to 6:30 PM** Strategies are offered for children diagnosed with High Functioning Autism and Asperger Disorder who may have learning challenges related to executive functioning, reading, math, and writing to promote appropriate educational and IEP planning.

*Presented by: Sarah Woldoff, Ph.D.*

## First Lady of NJ

(Continued from page 2)

New Jersey has a strong commitment to helping individuals and families affected by autism. The DHSS Early Intervention Program provides services to children from birth to age three who have a developmental delay or disability, including autism. In addition, the Governor's Council for Medical Treatment of Autism has awarded \$5 million in basic science research grants to study the causes, triggers and treatment of ASDs. DHSS also maintains an Autism Registry of diagnosed cases of autism that can help link families with services as well as provide data that can be used in research studies or in planning services for people with ASDs.

"This guide and website will help ease some of the burden on parents, helping them quickly find information and services that can benefit their child's development. Children who get early, appropriate services have the best opportunity to lead independent lives," said DHSS Acting Commissioner Mary O'Dowd, who hosted today's event. "I commend the Department of Human Services for creating these valuable resources."

"The state departments and private organizations that provide quality supports and services to children and adults with autism and other developmental disabilities have the common goal of assisting people in reaching their full potential," said DHS Commissioner Jennifer Velez. "Each of our departments worked together to develop the guide and the website, which will continue to evolve as we learn more from individuals, their families and from one another."

In August 2010, the Office on Autism was established within the DHS' Division of Developmental Disabilities, creating a centralized location to coordinate autism-related information. The Office has organized an Interdepartmental Work Group, which includes the New Jersey Departments of Human Services; Health and Senior Services; Children and Families; Community Affairs; Education; and Labor and Work Force Development to enhance coordination among state agencies charged with providing services to persons with autism spectrum disorder.

Autism is a spectrum of disorders that is complex and lifelong. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), nationwide, it is estimated that autism occurs in 1 out of every 110 births.

Most often, autism is diagnosed during the first three years of life and is characterized by difficulties with social interaction and communication, severely limited interests and repetitive behaviors. It is four

times more prevalent in boys than in girls and affects families of all races, ethnicities and socio-economic groups.

Throughout the month of April, First Lady Mary Pat Christie highlighted innovative work being done by organizations throughout the state to serve people with autism spectrum disorder. Mrs. Christie toured the EPIC School in Paramus to see the structured educational programs that are teaching new skills and increasing independence for students with autism and she visited the Woodrow Wilson Middle School coffee shop in Edison, which is operated by students with autism and other developmental disabilities. She also visited P.R.I.D.E. Center in Chatham to see first-hand the independent living skills and vocational training services provided there for young adults with autism and other special needs.

**DDD INFORMATION  
& DHS CENTRAL  
REGISTRY HOTLINE:**

**1-800-832-9173**

Contact us at:  
Division of Developmental Disabilities  
P.O. Box 727, Trenton, NJ 08625-0726

The Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) was created in response to the need for better and more effective services for state residents with developmental disabilities. Advocates for those services included many parents and other family members who wanted community-based alternatives to the institutional care that had been their only option for many decades.

Today, more than 40,000 individuals are eligible to receive services funded by the division, including a growing number who are under the age of 22. Most DDD-eligible individuals live in the community, either with family or in a community residence such as a group home or supervised apartment or in a Community Care Residence with a family caregiver. Almost 2,700 individuals reside in one of the seven developmental centers now administered by DDD.