

# Community Connections

A PUBLICATION OF THE CENTER FOR DISABILITIES | DECEMBER 2017  
A University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research and Service

## 2017 Center for Disabilities' Symposium and JAM

### Keynote Speakers

by Pat Herman, MURP, AICP, Department Manager and Events Planner

Be like David. Three simple words which embodied the spirit of the Symposium 2017 were shared by self-advocate Russell Lehmann as he opened the event with his keynote address. David was a total stranger who came to Lehmann's aid in an airport and this story was a reminder to the audience that we are all connected. "Show what you're made of. Give a damn. Stand above all the fighting and arguing. Be brave and open your heart...be like David."

Following Lehmann was a half-day interactive session that explored various transition pathways. Participants discussed and practiced using various tools to explore the topics of employment, health, postsecondary education, dating and healthy relationships and the importance of supported decision-making and self-advocacy. Dana Yarbrough, the director of family & individual involvement and support projects at Virginia Commonwealth University, led the session.

It was a lively start on day two of Symposium 2017, as Lawrence Carter-Long engaged the audience with his take on current events and stories of his life. Self-described as a "Media Enthusiast. Cinephile. Word Nerd. Whisky Fan. Vegan. Occasional Pundit. Unrepentant punster.", Carter-Long was inspiring in describing the importance of self-advocacy in his life. National-level disability policy has also been a big part of Carter-Long's career for many years.

Closing day two keynoter Kevin Locke, hoop dancer, indigenous north plains flautist, traditional

storyteller and cultural ambassador, engaged the event participants. The culture of Native people of the plains was shared through his traditional and modern flute performances and audience participation in his stories. After his amazing hoop dance, attendees amused each other in attempting to replicate Locke's actions. The day ended with everyone joining hands and performing a traditional line dance.

The employment breakfast on the last day of Symposium 2017 featured three standout keynotes. Richard Luecking, a subject matter expert on business, disability and school partnerships opened the day. Luecking described the many programs he helped implement that are related to school to work transition and employment of individuals with disabilities. Heather Weldon, program manager for supported

*"I really like the diversity of the conference (young and old, people with/without disabilities, different cultures, etc.). With adding diversity to the conference, we are able to work alongside each other and celebrate our differences."*

**- Cindy Kirschman,  
Transition Liaison**



employment for the City of Seattle, spoke about the process of hiring people with disabilities. She also discussed creating the program for Seattle and how this practice has become a model for dozens of city, county and state governments across the country. Attorney Penny Weldon addressed compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act from an employer's perspective. Her descriptive use of court cases encouraged the audience to ask questions related to situations they are struggling to address in their own offices.

The Symposium 2017 closing keynote speakers complimented Lehmann's opening address in reminding us that we are all connected. Starring in the A&E Television show "Born This Way", Sean McElwee and his mother Sandra Assimtos McElwee have invited the world to share their lives and connect with their daily activities. Their love and respect for each other was evident as they shared the struggles with the school system during McElwee's childhood to his life as an adult and his quest to find a girlfriend – a quest that was successful.

*"My favorite part of the Symposium is the LifeCourse Framework session. I think that it was interesting to learn about."*

**– Cassandra (K.C.) Rogat, Self-Advocate**

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## Breakout Sessions

by Steven Larson, M.Ed., M.Div., Department Assistant

The Center's Symposium is designed to bring people together in a welcoming environment that encourages education, sharing of ideas, rejuvenation and inspiration. The breakout sessions focused around the theme of the Symposium, Creating a Pathway of Opportunities, and were, in themselves, learning opportunities for service providers, educators, employers, persons with disabilities, families and others involved in the field of disabilities.

Self-Advocates were a vital part of the symposium, as not only attendees but also presenters for three different breakout sessions and co-hosts of many others. There were role models who shared their journeys and sessions that detailed how to overcome obstacles by implementing strategies that help jobseekers gain employment and establish healthy networking relationships. Family members attended sessions that offered hands-on learning, early intervention ideas, behavior assessment, alternatives to guardianship, tips on available technology and a comfortable atmosphere where they could listen to

and share personal stories of success.

Topics of interest to employers and job coaches ranged from a panel of job coaches who were open to any questions, workplace supports, mental health in the workplace, school to work programs, community re-entry and transition from school to employment in rural areas and on reservations.

Health and safety issues were of interest to many attendees, and they had a variety of session options. For instance, session topics included effective methods of creating and implementing Individual Healthcare Plans (IHPs) for students, adaptive Chinese Qi Gong breathing and strengthening exercises, participating in Special Olympics and their new sport of bocce ball, internet safety strategies, money management, interaction with law enforcement and current practices and issues with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome.

Included on the evaluations was a wonderful comment written in response to the questions: "What I liked most today is...":

"The spirits of the people who gather at these conferences. I like them and their ideas."



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## The JAM

by Kendra Gottsleben, B.A., Marketing Communication Specialist

Each year, the Center strives to engage and cultivate sessions for self-advocates who attend the annual Center for Disabilities' Symposium. One way this was accomplished was through an exciting partnership with The JAM. The JAM, a self-advocate event, was developed by the South Dakota Advocates for Change (SDAC) Leadership Team. They decided they needed a fun get-together and NOT "Just Another



Meeting!” The JAM event offered participants from across the state the opportunity to learn about advocating for their rights; healthy versus unhealthy dating relationships; respect for everyone in all situations, including social media and internet safety; person-centered thinking; inclusive arts and anti-bullying. We were happy to be able to continue such opportunities at the 2017 Symposium.

This melding of the minds created an incredible result, and this will continue as we start planning for next year’s symposium. The energy that each and every self-advocate brought to our

days together was terrific. Collaboration is key to any successful event and the SDAC was indeed an integral part in making this happen!



## World Café

by Richard Parent-Johnson, Ph.D., Senior Research Associate

For the fourth consecutive year, the Center for Disabilities’ Symposium and JAM included a “World Café” event. Staff from the Center always look forward to hearing what comes out of the World Café discussions. This year’s World Café event consciously referenced the “Creating Pathways of Opportunity” theme. It also was attended by a large, diverse AND especially energized group of participants! The group’s energy was boosted by the enthusiastic use of a “live Twitter feed.” This was implemented so that all attendees could keep up with the entire room’s conversational ideas.

By design, a World Café is a setting for “community conversations.” Each Café event is designed to bring people together for conversations “that matter.” These are conversations about things that are important to the participants as people who are connected to each other in important ways! They are conversations intended to “explore” and “expand” upon what we know about each other and about what we can do together.

Small groups (four to seven) of World Café participants were seated at numerous tables throughout the room. This was an exceptionally diverse mix of participants that included self-advocates, professional support staff and agency and organization administrators. Each table had a “host/note-taker” who remained at the same table throughout the entire World Café event. In this event, three questions were addressed in the space of an hour and a half. Fifteen minutes of open

dialog was allotted for each question - with an additional five minutes given to synthesizing the “key points” each group has expressed. The host/note-taker summarizes two to three key points made by their group and records that summary on a notecard that is then collected. At the end of each question, all participants were asked to move, randomly, to a new table.

As mentioned earlier, a new facet of this year’s World Café was the addition of the option to “live tweet” any of the responses coming from each table. There was also a “roving tweeter” to help facilitate the use of the link. Tweets (including photos) were visible to the entire audience on the presentation screen at the front of the room. However, the participants were reminded that participation in face-to-face dialog was the critical activity of these World Café conversations.



*“My favorite part of the Symposium was hearing Richard Luecking’s talk about the success of hiring people with disabilities in various employment settings. His talk really inspired me and others to look for more jobs in our community and across the world.”*

**– Sarah Rick, Self-Advocate**

Exploring and expanding upon what we know about each other and about what we can do together can also be understood as “networking.” True networking occurs when there’s an understanding that everyone in the room has equal value. It’s about people enjoying other people, communicating passions and connecting with others who share those passions. It’s about listening; figuring out what others need and connecting them with people you think can help, without any designs for personal gain. Experience shows that the most successful networkers build genuine relationships and give more than they receive. They go beyond thinking, “What’s in it for me?” and, instead, they ask, “How can I help?” That approach served to prompt the first World Café question.



*“My favorite part was having the advocates and professionals merge together in one conference. Having them both at one conference is a great option. My advice to people interested in next year’s conference is to go. There are a variety of people that attend and a variety of topics to be discussed.”*

**– Rhonda Erickson,  
Benefits Specialist**

**Question One: How can we help each other?**

A summarized selection of results includes:

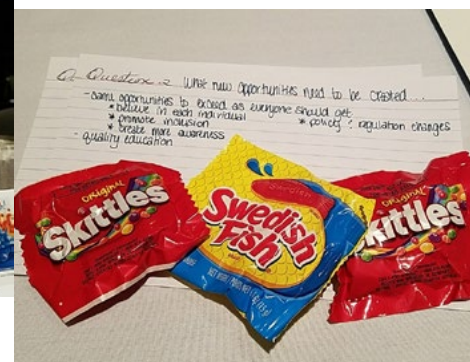
- Learn to ask “What do YOU need?” and “What can I do to help?”
- Work together on common tasks (e.g., Special Olympics)
- Get to know one another better (asking things like “What do you do?”)
- Recognize that some people don’t have families to support them in making decisions and/or taking actions
- Utilize each other’s skills
- Appreciate what we have in common with one another
- Be respectful of one another
- Compliment one another; point out each other’s strengths
- Seek out and listen to others who may have different beliefs
- Listen to, understand and to learn about unique situational needs
- Invite and include other than the “usual” people
- Smile; create a positive atmosphere
- Volunteer

A summarized selection of results includes:

- Create the same opportunities for persons with disabilities that everyone else has
- Promote independence rather than reliance on professional staff and others
- Help persons with disabilities develop/improve “people skills”
- Believe in each individual
- Build better relationships between agencies and businesses
- Improve job coaches access to businesses
- Provide more options for transportation (especially rural areas; hours)
- Improve/expand self-employment supports
- Create greater access to post-secondary education
- Create/improve opportunities for artistic expression
- Develop opportunities for travel and new cultural experiences
- Create a forum to hear from people with disabilities
- Develop leadership skills and “leadership positions”
- Increase independent living options
- Develop an easy-to-navigate website accessing all state services

Again, the theme of this Center for Disabilities’ Symposium and JAM was “Creating Pathways of Opportunity.” The second question, then, focused on the critical aspect of creating “opportunity!”

**Question Two: What NEW OPPORTUNITIES do we need to create for persons with disabilities?**



Finally, focusing on actions that could be taken to “create” opportunities identified as important and meaningful to the participants. Following that view, the third and final World Café question was driven from a personal action perspective.

**Question Three:** What ONE specific thing are you going to do in your OWN life (or work) to create a new opportunity for someone with a disability?

A summarized selection of results includes:

- Encourage someone to participate in an organization and to make new personal connections (network)
- Make sure to include “someone new” in what I do

- Do a better job matching people to jobs
- Volunteer and invite others to also become a volunteer
- Share the information and insights from this Symposium with others
- Create a “job shadowing” opportunity for a person with a disability
- Find a way to advocate to policymakers for state and nationwide change
- Help a nonverbal person communicate with others
- Say/ask someone “How can I help you do what you want to do?”
- Reach out to someone in a rural community
- Help someone believe in her or himself!

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## Awards Ceremony

by Tova Eggerstedt, M.S., Behavioral Specialist

On Tuesday, Sept. 12, the Center for Disabilities staff welcomed the opportunity to publicly recognize the recipients of our 2017 Community Service Awards. These notable awards are given each year to individuals from within the state of South Dakota who have contributed significantly to the field of disabilities.

The recipients of the 2017 Distinguished Service Award were Lake Preston School District administrators Dana Felderman and Tim Casper, recognized for their tremendous support and dedication to special education students, families and staff.

In addition, Cali and Eric Olesen, managers at the Subway restaurant in Brandon, South Dakota, were awarded the Outstanding Employer Service Award for their instrumental work in facilitating a successful employee-student relationship that inspires the staff who work alongside students in the Project Skills and Volunteers Program.

The recipient of the Employee of the Year Award, Sierra Mathews, was honored for her exceptional work for a Sioux Falls local business, Oh My Cupcakes! Mathews was described as a remarkable asset to the daily operations of the store, willingly taking on the tasks that are behind the scenes but necessary to running a successful business.

This year’s Outstanding Family Service Award was presented to Lisa Stanley for her passion, dedication and perseverance as a lobbyist and parent advocate. Stanley’s willingness to share her story with families, educators, legislators and many others is a significant reason that children on the Autism spectrum will have greater access to meaningful therapy. Unfortunately Stanley was unable to attend the ceremony.

Assisting in facilitating the Center for Disabilities annual awards ceremony was Senior Research Associate Ann Wilson. Department Assistant Steven Larson presented the awards to recipients.



Dana Felderman and Tim Casper, administrators at Lake Preston School District, accepting the 2017 Distinguished Service Award.



Cali and Eric Olesen, managers at the Subway Restaurant in Brandon, accepting the 2017 Outstanding Employer Service Award.



Sierra Mathews, employee at Oh My Cupcakes! in Sioux Falls, accepting the 2017 Outstanding Employee of the Year Award.

# Coordinating Transitions of Care

by Richard Parent-Johnson, Ph.D., Senior Research Associate  
and Emily Meier, M.A., Training and Technical Assistance Specialist



Health care transitions from pediatric to adult medicine for young adults with disabilities and/or chronic health conditions are highly problematic and result in increased health disparities and poorer outcomes. This is a persistent and systemic problem of access. A lack of protocols, tools and inconsistent training for care coordination exists at all levels.

The Center for Disabilities, a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) located at the University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine, has developed and implemented two tools (Transition Engagement Guide and DocTalk), developed collaboratively with families, intellectual/developmental disability patients, pediatricians, nurses and other health professionals to facilitate successful health care transitions. The Transition Engagement Guide is a scripted dialog assessing the young adult's current assets, opportunities and connections key to making transitions; it also facilitates action planning. DocTalk is a communication "cue card" helping patients actively participate in medical appointments. Third-year pediatric residents and genetics

counseling graduate students receive training (both didactic and experiential) using these tools to address the health care transition needs of young adults with disabilities.

The Center for Disabilities recently replicated this training with "inter-professional teams" of nurses (from pediatric, adult and family practice). Transition is a care coordination issue. Given their role in clinical practice, nurses are the most viable group to implement these tools as a matter of routine care coordination. The better the coordination across the lifespan, the more successful the transition. Training inter-professional teams in a "shared space" allowed them to develop a common knowledge of the tools and learn how to implement them in a more coordinated fashion. Nurses are implementing these tools in their home practices. Qualitative and quantitative data specific to successes and barriers to implementation are being collected. Interpretation of that data will then drive development of new tools and practices for improving care coordination as well as future research and model development.

**For more information please contact Richard Parent-Johnson, Ph.D.  
or Emily Meier, M.A. at 1-800-658-3080 or Emily.A.Meier@usd.edu.**

This activity was funded by grants from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Community Living and the Special Hope (WITH) Foundation.

*This article also appeared online in the Association of University Centers on Disabilities' AUCD Health and Disabilities Digest.*

# Building Leaders Today and Tomorrow

by Ryan Bartz, B.S., Marketing Communication Specialist

When people think of the word “leader,” they often think of a CEO of a company or a board member on the city council; however, leaders can be people that you see every day and can come from all walks of life. The USD Center for Disabilities is helping foster such leadership by providing Native American students an opportunity to gain leadership skills in the disability field.

In September 2015, the USD Center for Disabilities received a National Training Initiative (NTI) grant, funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Administration for Community Living. This gave the Center an opportunity to support a collaborative, immersive, experimental learning approach for Native American students from a tribal university. Participating universities included Sinte Gleska University in Mission, South Dakota and Sitting Bull College in Mobridge, South Dakota. Eligibility requirements for the NTI program included being a Native American student majoring in human services at any of the two tribal schools mentioned, having relevant experience and knowledge of the South Dakota DD (Developmental Disabilities) Network, and being motivated and passionate about the disability field. In addition, students were required to share their expertise and learning in different tribal communities.

Burdette Clifford, program director for Sicangu Vocational Rehabilitation (previously department chair of the Human Services Program at Sinte Gleska University), says that working with the students and the other tribal universities has been a positive attribute to the program.

“All of the students that I have worked with in the last two years have been wonderful. They have an eagerness to learn and want to contribute in any way they can,” says Clifford.

While the internship only lasts nine months, students learn about a wide variety of disabilities and get hands-on experience by observing different clinics that the Center offers.

“It gives students the hands-on experience and a broader knowledge of what an institution like USD’s Center for Disabilities would offer, such as services and programs that they otherwise may not be aware of,” says Clifford.

One of these students is Tori Standing Cloud. She recently graduated from Sinte Gleska University with a Bachelor of Science degree in human services and a concentration in mental health. She heard about the program through Whitney Jones, a former NTI program participant.

“He talked to me about this opportunity and said that I should apply for the program to learn more about what is out there in the disability field and what I can apply back to the Rosebud Reservation,” says Standing Cloud.

During her internship, she has been active in the Center’s activities such as attending Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) clinics, addressing public health issues of concern to the Native American population at a Research Initiatives for Student Enhancement-Undergraduate Program (RISE-UP) seminar and attending the Yankton Area Mental Wellness Conference in June.

“Out of all the experiences, my favorite was attending the FASD clinics because I was able to



Top: Whitney Jones and kids.

Bottom: Tori Standing Cloud presenting at 2017 Association of Univeristy Centers on Disabilities Conference.

gain knowledge about this topic and with the kids that I saw, it has a significant impact in the Native American communities,” says Standing Cloud.

Standing Cloud states that while people on the reservations are not aware of the resources available to them, she hopes to create awareness about the services people with disabilities utilize in her capstone project.

“I want to show people in my community that there are resources out there that can help families and children on the reservation and that they are included in the disability community as well,” says Standing Cloud.

After she completes her internship, she wants to work in the mental health field as a family counselor and continue to help Native American communities in the future.

“The skills that I have learned in the NTI program will help me gain confidence, help others in need and change how I want to see things in my community. That’s the big life-changer for me,” says Standing Cloud.

Not only do students gain experience from observing different clinics that the USD Center for Disabilities offers, but they also get exposure for professionalism, government and policy-making.

“Learning about making your voice heard in Pierre and networking with people are beneficial aspects of the program. One day, they will be the change-makers of their communities and people will take notice and work with them on change moving forward,” says Jan Brockel, site coordinator for Sitting Bull College-Mobridge campus.

Brockel’s mentee, Benny Kasto, was selected to participate in the program this year and has enjoyed every aspect of the internship. “At first I had a lot of questions about what I was getting myself into but then as the internship went forward, I learned a lot,” says Kasto.

Kasto is currently a senior at Sitting Bull College, where he is earning an Associate of Science (A.S.) degree in criminal justice with a focus as a lay advocate/paralegal, with anticipated completion in fall 2018. Next, Kasto intends to eventually pursue a bachelor’s degree. In the future, he wants to attend law school in either South Dakota or North Dakota. His career goal is to work with people with disabilities within the court system.

“I also learned about how to interact with people who have a disability, as I do have family members who have a disability in some capacity

and where to go for help,” says Kasto.

He has spoken about his internship experiences with people in different communities and encourages those interested to apply.

The program has also seen huge success for past participant Whitney Jones. Since Jones completed the NTI program, he has graduated from Sinte Gleska University with a Bachelor of Science in counseling with an emphasis in chemical dependency. Upon graduation, he was a counselor for kindergarten through 6th grade at St. Francis Indian School. His responsibilities included working with kids of all abilities, helping sixth grade students transition from elementary to middle school, and helping run the school’s OLEWUS Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP). Most recently, Jones began a new job at the Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation office on the Sinte Gleska University campus as case manager/counselor.

In the future they will become the new faces of leadership on the Rosebud Indian and Standing Rock Sioux Tribe Reservations.

“Our students that complete the NTI program go into careers that better serve the communities they grew up in. They can share their experiences about growing up on the reservation and what adversities they had to overcome to get to where they are today,” said Clifford.

“I would encourage any student to apply for the NTI program. They can enrich their experiences, become a leader in their community and make a difference on the reservation,” says Brockel.

The grant for the NTI program was a stand-alone grant for two years and is now sustained through the LEND (Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental & Related Disabilities) program at the USD Center for Disabilities.



Benny Kasto and family.



# Additional Squad Members



**Tova Eggerstedt** began working for the Center for Disabilities in July 2017, after moving to Sioux Falls from Kenyon, Minnesota. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree in journalism and mass communications from New Mexico State University, and a Master of Science degree in counselor education and K-12 school counseling licensure

from Winona State University. Before beginning employment with the Center for Disabilities, Eggerstedt worked in special education and also as an elementary, middle and high school counselor for several Twin Cities area schools.

Although first beginning with the Center for Disabilities as a department assistant, she now serves as a behavior specialist where she works to support educators by assisting in developing training opportunities and working directly with school professionals. In addition, Eggerstedt served as a photographer during the 2017 Symposium and has taken photos for the *South Dakota Possibilities Magazine*, Parry Center trainings and other events. She has also been helpful in assisting with the LEND program, creating infographics, newsletters, flyers, brochures and other marketing materials.

In her spare time, she enjoys supporting her son who attends Augustana University (AU) in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and wrestles for the AU Vikings, hanging out with her creative and musically inclined 11-year-old daughter, and traveling to Alaska.



**Kurt Schiferl** joined the Center for Disabilities in October as a behavioral specialist. His education background and work experience has been in serving people with intellectual disabilities with 30 plus years of experience in the field. Schiferl grew up in Davis, South Dakota, a small town about 30 miles southwest of Sioux Falls. He has a

Bachelor of Science degree in sociology from South Dakota State University. Schiferl has worked in many different capacities in the South Dakota Developmental Center, Department of Human Services, Division of Developmental Disabilities and several different community support providers in the state. He is a behavioral specialist on the new Community Supports Behavior Project at the Center. He believes that his experience working with people in South Dakota will help him contribute to the Center's effort in this area.

In his spare time, Schiferl volunteers in his church in Children's Church, Royal Rangers Commander and safety team. He also travels to the Lower Brule Reservation once a month to serve a meal there. His hobbies include camping, hiking, gardening and learning anything he can about history. He also enjoys spending time at the family cabin at Big Stone Lake in northeast South Dakota.

# Additional Squad Members (continued)

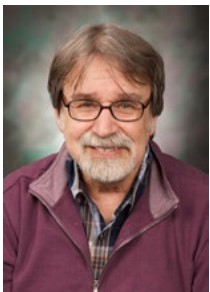


**Taylor Funke** began working at the Center for Disabilities in November 2017 as a behavior specialist. Prior to coming to the Center for Disabilities, she worked as the crisis support coordinator at the Helpline Center facilitating trainings and working with grant projects in suicide prevention.

Funke also worked as a chemical

dependency and prevention counselor in a variety of settings including schools, the county jail and a residential treatment setting. She is a graduate of the University of South Dakota with a bachelor's degree in addiction studies with an emphasis in addiction and prevention services and a minor in psychology. Funke is a Certified Addiction Counselor and a Certified Prevention Specialist.

She grew up in Pierre and enjoys spending time with family and friends, especially boating on the Missouri River or hiking in the Black Hills. Her husband, Joe, is a firefighter with Sioux Falls Fire Rescue.



**Richard Kiefer-O'Donnell** joined the Center for Disabilities' staff in early November 2017 as one of our two new assistant directors. Prior to that, he served as associate director with UCEDDs in Alaska [University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) Center for Human Development] for nine years and Montana [University of Montana

(UM) Rural Institute] for four years. He has also taught in conventional faculty roles on those two campuses and at the University of Minnesota and University of Utah. In addition to his work with children, teens and adults and their families, he enjoys working in rural regions, with both Alaska Native and American Indian populations.

Kiefer-O'Donnell received his Ph.D. in Special Education: Learners with Severe and Multiple Disabilities, from the University of Utah in 1996. He received his MEd in Special Education: Birth through Five Years, Multiple Disabilities, from the University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana in 1980, and in 1976 Kiefer-O'Donnell's Bachelor of Science in Psychology was received from the University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana.

He has served for six years as Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities and Related Disabilities (LEND) faculty in Alaska, working closely with the program's developmental pediatrician and speech therapist to teach Differential Diagnosis for Autism, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) and other intellectual disabilities to both long and medium term LEND fellows there. He was appointed by Gov. Bill Walker as a member of Alaska's State Independent Living Council, or SILC, a board mandated by the Administration for Community Living, like the South Dakota Council on Developmental Disabilities, in support of consumers who experience mobility and/or sensory challenges. Kiefer-O'Donnell has two great rug rats, ages 26 and 24, and also loves standing in cold streams and rivers pretending to catch fish. What he really is doing is enjoying being in the moment and finding harmony in world around us. And lastly, for more than 30 years, he's been trying to learn to cook.



**Jake Cummings** joined the Center as a research associate in August 2017.

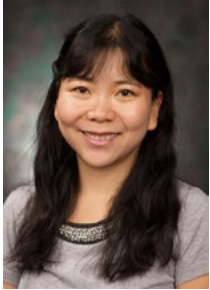
Prior to this, Cummings worked with universities, state agencies and nonprofits as a writing tutor and sociology instructor, researcher and volunteer in Montana, New York and South Dakota after earning his doctorate in Sociology and Rural

Studies in 2013. He appreciates the opportunity to continue public service in his home state.

Outside of work, Cummings enjoys the outdoors, following the SDSU Jackrabbits, Minnesota Twins and Vikings, and spending time with family. Friends joke that he has an inflated opinion of the cinematic magnificence of Liam Neeson and the musical genius of Def Leppard, The Eagles and Shania Twain, but Cummings hopes that these possible errors in judgment don't prevent you from discussing ways in which he can help the Center's research inform disability service provision in our area.

If Cummings' choice in sports teams, movie stars and music have you spooked, you still may be able to discuss some of his favorite television shows, which include *Blue Bloods*, *Longmire*, *Madam Secretary*, *The Last Ship* and *This Is Us*. Given that roster, you can be relatively assured he cannot criticize, right?

# Additional Squad Members (continued)



**Qijuan Fang** began working as a post-doctoral researcher for the Center for Disabilities in August 2017, after receiving her Ph.D. in developmental psychology and her master's degree in applied statistics from Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio. Fang is originally from Shenzhen, China, and her native languages are

Cantonese and Mandarin Chinese. She also spent a year in Kyoto, Japan, as an exchange student in college and is currently trying to pick up Japanese. If anyone is interested in traveling in China or Japan she will be happy to provide advice. She has a variety of research and teaching experiences, and her dissertation focused on parental attachment, bullying and relationship issues in teens. Fang has also taught some

psychology courses from the areas of developmental psychology, abnormal psychology and statistics.

Fang has a split position between the Center for Disabilities and the USD School of Education in Vermillion, South Dakota. Most weeks she is in the Center on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and travels to Vermillion on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Her main job in the Center is to manage research and statistics-related activities. For example, she recently examined a dataset regarding autism and conducted data analyses for a multi-year National Core Indicators dataset.

In her free time, she enjoys hanging out with friends, exercising, listening to music, bicycling, skiing, watching a movie, reading and singing.

## Upcoming Trainings

For the most current and up-to-date trainings and events, please view the Center's [Upcoming Events](#) website page.

### **2018 South Dakota Special Education Conference – Ready, Set, Grow!**

Each year, our Special Education Conference attracts hundreds of people interested in special education from across South Dakota. Along with other fun activities, participants will enjoy networking! This year's keynote speaker is Tim Clue.

Join us on March 13-14 at the Sioux Falls Convention Center in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. To learn more click [here](#).

### **2018 Center for Disabilities Symposium and JAM**

Our annual symposium brings together people who are active in the field of disabilities in a welcoming environment that encourages education, the sharing of ideas, rejuvenation and inspiration. The symposium fosters energy and creativity among service providers, educators, employers, persons with disabilities, families and government agencies. It promotes leadership and workforce development for individuals with disabilities and the people who serve them.

Join us on Oct. 21-23 at the Sioux Falls Convention Center in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. To learn more click [here](#).

### **South Dakota Educator's Institute**

The former Summer Institute hosted by TSLP and Summer Institute Rejuvenation for K-12 Educators Conference and Autism Conference hosted by the Center for Disabilities are combining to host the South Dakota Educator's Institute.

Join us July 16-20, 2018 at University Center in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Stay tuned for more details.