



# Community Connections

A PUBLICATION OF THE  
CENTER FOR DISABILITIES

**AUGUST 2022**

A University Center for Excellence in  
Developmental Disabilities Education,  
Research and Service



## University of South Dakota Board Certified Behavior Analysis (BCBA) Program

by Ryan Groeneweg, Ed.S., BCBA, Director of Community Education

The USD Center for Disabilities is working closely with the University of South Dakota and LifeScape to address a significant workforce shortage of licensed behavior analysts in South Dakota. Presently, there are just over 50 practicing Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs) residing in the state. For perspective, surrounding states such as Nebraska and Iowa have more than double that number, while Minnesota has six times as many. The partnership among all agencies allows for the first-in-the-state BCBA program, which began with the first class in fall of 2021. This summer, we welcome the second group of future professionals seeking to become BCBAs, while last year's group will start the final year of coursework.

USD Center for Disabilities' Director of Community Education, Ryan Groeneweg, is the current director and

adjunct faculty member of the BCBA program. He is working hard to build a community of instructors who are experts in applied behavior analysis, and who bring a wealth of experience. The adjunct faculty supporting the program include Dr. Kimberly Marso, LifeScape and Darcie Knight, Sioux Falls School District. Each faculty member provides didactic training and real-world examples to each class. Students reap the benefits of being trained in South Dakota by professionals that work in South Dakota.

The inaugural class, or Cohort One, of the USD BCBA Certificate program includes six working professionals from the Sioux Falls region. They have successfully completed the first year of the USD BCBA program and are preparing for their second year. This program is offered one night per week to accommodate the working schedules of most

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*The Center for Disabilities at the USD Sanford School of Medicine is South Dakota's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research and Service (UCEDD). As the South Dakota UCEDD, The Center for Disabilities works with others to create opportunities that enhance the lives of people with disabilities and their families through training, services, information, research, and community education. The Center for Disabilities delivers activities across the lifespan from a community-based, family-centered and culturally-competent perspective.*

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professionals. Students enrolled in a graduate program are also able to apply and take one additional BCBA class per semester in addition to their program of study. Graduate students can complete their master's degree while also fulfilling the required courses needed to be eligible to become a BCBA.

The first BCBA graduate class began in August 2021 and the final course for Cohort One will be in summer 2023. The program is also preparing to review and accept applications for Cohort Two scheduled to begin in the fall of 2022. Each student pictured works full-time in their respective positions as school psychologist, occupational therapist, autism specialist and test examiners. All of them currently work closely with students with Autism Spectrum Disorders and other related neuro-developmental disabilities.

## New PEERS® Training

by Jon Wallner, M.S., Training Associate,  
National Core Indicators Specialist

In collaboration with UCLA Semel Institute, the USD Center for Disabilities was excited to offer PEERS® for Adolescents training. This training was the first in-person PEERS® training offered in South Dakota! PEERS® (Program for Education and Enrichment of Relational Skills) is a manualized, social skills training intervention for youth with social challenges. It has a strong evidence base for use with adolescents and young adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder, but is also appropriate for adolescents and young adults with ADHD, anxiety, depression and other socioemotional problems. This evidence-based program has been field tested extensively, expanding to locations across the United States, and translated into over a dozen languages used in over 125 countries!

The PEERS® for Adolescents Certified Training Seminar: Caregiver-Assisted Intervention is designed exclusively for mental health professionals, educators, medical professionals, speech and language pathologists, occupational and recreational therapists, researchers and other professionals who work with adolescents with social challenges. We were excited to have Shannon Bates, Psy.D., director of training at the UCLA PEERS clinic, to lead our three-day in-person training from Aug. 8 – 10 at the Learning Lab in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Each training day took place from 8 a.m. – 4 p.m. The training was offered at \$350 per person. This price point was significantly lower than UCLA's own virtual training cost of \$500. The registration also included a copy of the book, a \$50 value. This training enabled providers to implement PEERS® in clinical or educational settings as PEERS® for Adolescents Certified Providers.





## Navigating Our Way Into the Future

by Amy Scepaniak, M.S., COMS®/CLVT®, Deaf-Blind Program Coordinator

The Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) is a professional membership



**Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired**

organization dedicated to professionals who provide services to persons with vision loss, including Deaf-Blindness. They promote and support professionals by advocating for evidence-based practices, high-quality standards, value-added resources and giving voice to issues of critical importance, as well as professional development through conferences, virtual offerings and publications to strengthen the knowledge, skills and abilities of professionals within the field.

An AER membership gives people an AER chapter membership at no additional cost. Chapters provide opportunities to connect with local professionals who offer services and resources that enable individuals who are blind or visually impaired to achieve their educational, employment and personal independence goals. Each chapter is unique. With locations throughout the United States and Canada, they provide additional member benefits to AER

members at the local level.

North Dakota and South Dakota make up the Dakotas AER Chapter. Each year the Dakotas

Chapter holds a conference in alternating states. This year's conference, "Navigating Our Way into the Future," will be held Oct. 5-7 in Aberdeen, South Dakota. Featured speakers are chapter members Lacey Long and Christy Hulscher, as well as nationally known speakers in the field of vision impairments and deaf-blindness Maurice Belote, Chrissy Cowan and Debra Sewell. The conference will end with a "success panel," which will feature individuals from South Dakota with visual impairments who have successfully navigated their way in life, including Ryan Groeneweg, Center for Disabilities' Director of Community Education.

Registration is open to both members and non-members. To view the agenda and registration, click [here](#).

For more information contact Amy Scepaniak, Deaf-Blind Program coordinator and Dakotas Chapter Board Member, at [Amy.Scepaniak@usd.edu](mailto:Amy.Scepaniak@usd.edu).



# Inaugural “The Style Show: A Runway to Empower”

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

In 2021, Rare by Design, a new organization, joined the Sioux Falls, South Dakota, nonprofit landscape. The mission of this new organization is to celebrate the rare that makes us unique and extraordinary. Rare by Design strives to assist individuals with disabilities and rare diseases, along with their families, in creating awareness of inclusion, representation and living life positively.

This past May, Rare by Design hosted its inaugural event, “The Style Show: A Runway to Empower” to give a platform – or in this case, a runway – for all. Rare by Design believes beauty is stitched within each and every one of us. It doesn’t matter how each person struts down the runway, it’s the rarity within us all that makes us beautiful. Proceeds raised during “The Style Show” helped raise awareness and financial support for Breathe Bravely, an organization championing people with cystic fibrosis.

“The Style Show: A Runway to Empower” featured models of varied abilities, ages, genders, sexual orientations, races and diverse body types. The main goal of this event was to demonstrate what true diversity can look like. Often when the word diversity is discussed, people with disabilities/rare diseases are excluded. People with disabilities make up the largest minority group, as a person can be both a minority and have a disability/rare disease. Rare by Design aimed for attendees to realize the importance of how much true representation matters in all aspects of life. Including all means “all” in every way, shape and form, ranging from day-to-day situations to television shows and commercials to board rooms and businesses.

“The Style Show” showcased how clothing can empower people of all abilities and diverse body types with confidence and how local businesses play key roles in this process. The clothing models wore came from local boutiques and stores in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Three models highlighted adaptive apparel from mainstream brands.

Seventeen models, all from South Dakota, strutted the runway to a cheering, sold-out crowd. Sixty percent of the models represented people with varying disabilities and rare diseases. While all models were from South Dakota, attendees hailed from Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, New York, California and South Dakota.

Rare by Design felt incredibly fortunate for the community support received for a first-time fundraising event, and believes the community is ready for increased diversity in all aspects of our world. People are excited to see more people who look like them and the positive, successful lives they lead. Rare by Design looks forward to continuing to make a difference.



To see a recap video of “The Style Show: A Runway to Empower,” click [here](#).



# Training with Nationally Recognized Dr. Ross Greene

by Aimee Deliramich, PhD., Licensed Clinical Psychologist

In June 2022, the Center for Disabilities and the South Dakota Department of Education was excited to host a live two-day virtual training with Dr. Ross Greene, a nationally recognized psychologist and creator of “Collaborative & Proactive Solutions.” Dr. Greene is well known for his philosophy that “kids do well if they can.” He challenges educators, mental health providers, parents and anyone working with children, to view disruptive and challenging behaviors differently. Dr. Greene encourages providers to identify and work to solve the problem, rather than focus on modifying the behavior. His belief is that all behaviors stem from a lagging skill, such as problems with emotion regulation, inability to problem solve, reduced frustration tolerance and/or limited flexibility/adaptability. Once the lagging skill and unsolved problem have been identified, they can be addressed collaboratively and proactively with the child.



The motivation behind Dr. Greene’s approach stems from his numerous years of experience in schools, detention facilities and prisons where the emphasis has been on punishment, restraint and seclusion which he believes only places a bandage on the issues and does not actually solve the problems. Dr. Greene’s mission is to influence this change with as many schools, teachers, providers and parents as he can reach. Many resources are available for free through his website at [livesinthebalance.org](https://livesinthebalance.org).

We hope to explore additional training opportunities with Dr. Greene in the future and encourage school districts, community organizations and parents to consider attending!

## Participants made the following comments during the training:

“I’m so amazed by Dr. Greene’s ability to make this digestible.”

“I like his direct approach to dealing with conventional wisdom.”

“I am finding this training extremely valuable and plan to share with others to the best of my ability.”

“This is such a different approach and challenges everything I thought I knew. I’m excited to put it into practice.”

## Adventure for Leadership and Fulfilment with Access (ALFA) Camp

by Jim Warne, M.A., Community Engagement Director, Oyáte Circle Director, Wayne Waston, B.A, Oyate Circle Coordinator, Pat Herman, MURP, AICP, ADAC, Special Projects Planner



What could be more exciting for young adults than attending summer camp? The Center for Disabilities’ Oyáte Circle held an Adventure for Leadership and Fulfilment with Access (ALFA) Camp on the Pine Ridge Reservation in late June and early July, at Little Wound High School in Kyle, South Dakota, and Lakota Tech High School near Pine Ridge, South Dakota. Students between the ages of 16 - 21 traveled to each other’s school for the camp. This camp was sponsored by the South Dakota Department of Human Services, the Division of Rehabilitation Services in conjunction with Pine Ridge Vocational

Rehabilitation. The ALFA Camp focused on preparing young adults to enter the workplace.

ALFA campers were encouraged to dream beyond just obtaining a job and to envision holding gainful employment that would provide the opportunity for leadership and fulfillment. The students learned to be workplace ready, explored jobs and careers and gained confidence that they can earn a fulfilling living. Instructors at the ALFA Camp used cultural components and traditions while covering topics of self-advocacy, workplace readiness, business plans, job exploration and available resources. ALFA campers visited businesses in each community to learn what jobs are available and to practice applying for as future job seekers.



The final day of the ALFA Camp was a trip to Rapid City, South Dakota, to visit and learn from Native American entrepreneurs. While there they also explored the Indigenous Community Center.

## Welcome New Staff Members



**Dr. Aimee Deliramich** is from Wyoming originally and obtained her undergraduate degree at the University of Wyoming in psychology. She then traveled to Hawaii where she lived for two years and completed her master's degree in counseling psychology before returning to the Midwest to receive her doctorate degree in clinical psychology from the University of South Dakota. Starting during her undergraduate years, Dr. Deliramich began working with individuals with disabilities and began to find her passion for working with people. She was a direct support professional before working as a group home supervisor for adults with intellectual/cognitive disabilities. Prior to coming to the Center for Disabilities, she was providing psychology services at LifeScape. While at LifeScape, Dr. Deliramich was a member of many multidisciplinary and diagnostic teams and worked to disseminate a better understanding of psychology and mental health and how it impacts individuals. She feels incredibly passionate about working with people related to mental health and disabilities and is excited to grow in her new role at the Center for Disabilities as a member within our clinics and providing outreach and education. She is looking forward to working collaboratively with community members on improving and enhancing services, as well as mentoring graduate students as they prepare to enter their respective fields of study. In her free time, Dr. Deliramich enjoys spending time with her family, running, camping and being outdoors.



**Brittany Schmidt** is a speech language pathologist who has a career-long focus on Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). She graduated in 1988 from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls and has worked in public school settings, hospital settings, the Center for Disabilities as their ASD Program manager, and in private practice. Most recently she returned as an employee to the Center as a speech language pathologist for their LEND and ASD clinics. In addition, Schmidt will be providing trainings and course offerings at University of South Dakota. Primary areas of interest include functional communication for challenging behavior, social thinking intervention and executive functioning support and services. Student and professional development is an area of collaboration that she is particularly interested in enhancing at the Center.

# Upcoming Trainings

Stay up-to-date through [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

## **Professional Development: Concentration in Deaf-Blindness**

This fall, you can join us to take An introduction to Deaf-Blindness or Deaf-Blindness: Assessment and Instructional Planning. These courses were developed in collaboration with National Center on Deaf-Blindness (NCDB) and are aligned with Council for Exceptional Children competencies for educators. Educators and related service providers can join.

Each course will be 14 weeks long and require approximately three hours of online meetings, which will also be scheduled throughout the semester.

\*Three graduate credits for an additional cost of \$120 (\$40/credit) are available through the University of South Dakota. Registration information will be emailed to participants after registration.

Join us Aug. 23 – Dec. 9 from 6 p.m. – 8 p.m. CST via Zoom. To register, click [here](#).

## **Autism 101: Characteristics, Criterion & Interventions Across the Spectrum**

The purpose of the course is to provide training and assistance to South Dakota educators and administrators who serve students with Autism Spectrum Disorders and other challenging developmental disabilities. The primary objective is to build capacity and the skills to improve outcomes for students. This course is designed for those participants who are new to the field, have been introduced but not had extensive experience working with autistic students or who are seeking to refresh their knowledge base about Autism Spectrum Disorders.

\*Graduate credits will be available pending approval from the University of South Dakota.

Join us Sept. 12, Oct. 17 and Nov. 7 from 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. CST at the Wegner Library in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. To register, click [here](#).

## **Childhood Mental Health & Diagnoses**

The purpose of this course is to provide training and assistance to South Dakota educators, administrators and graduate students who are interested in learning more about childhood mental health and psychopathology. The focus of this course will be to promote a better understanding of childhood mental health and diagnostic criteria, as well as commonly occurring social, emotional and behavioral problems which may present in children and adolescents. Our instructor, Aimee Deliramich, will be instructing live. An online option is available, but attendance is expected at each live session.

\* Graduate credits will be available pending approval from the University of South Dakota.

Join us Sept. 16, Oct. 14 and Nov. 4 from 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. CST at the Wegner Library in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. To register, click [here](#).