

PARTNERS IN TRANSITION

THE FLORIDA SUMMIT ON TRANSITION 2007

THE PEABODY ORLANDO

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*** OPENING SESSION AND WELCOME ***

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2007

8:30 A.M.

NILA BENITO: Hi. Good morning. I'm Nila Benito, and I'm a member of the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, who is a big supporter of Partners in Transition, the main supporter. And I also work at the Florida Center for Inclusive Communities at the University of South Florida. And most importantly, I'm a mom of two youth with disabilities who are going through transition.

I'd like to welcome you all here today and I want to thank our very active advisory committee. And you'll see everyone's name, just on the inside of your program.

This advisory committee is not your typical advisory committee. We really -- we're having like weekly phone calls, and they are working very hard to make sure this summit is a success for everyone. A lot of them are serving

as facilitators and recorders and hosts. So I would like to thank them for all their hard work to make this what it is.

And I just have just a few words, and then I'm going to turn it over. I was reading a book last night a friend gave me from Lee Iacocca, it says, "where have all the leaders gone?" I don't know if anyone has heard of the book. It's pretty controversial. I started reading it last night and I was like, wow, this book is pretty controversial.

It talks about where are all the leaders. As soon as I opened it, I thought, you know, every person in here is a leader. When I was reading what it takes to be a leader, it says it takes courage to think outside the box. It takes curiosity to ask questions. It takes communication to sit down at the table together to discuss issues that may be difficult, and it takes commitment to change the world, to change the status quo, to change the way things are.

And I think the way everyone has come to

this summit, those of you who have been here before and those of you new, you have all those qualities. So we are so lucky to be in the company of each other. Because you are our leaders. You, obviously, have the curiosity, because you're going to learn from our speakers and from each other. You have the commitment, because you're in this field and you came to the table and you're willing to communicate, because that's the majority of what this summit is about. The majority of us sitting down with your fellow team members, communicate and figuring this out about how to move forward.

So I'm so pleased that you're taking time out of your lives to do this and to know that the effects of what you're going to do here today, the rippling effects and the legacy could lead in the lives of so many individuals after us.

So I welcome you this morning. And I turn the podium over to Lewis Persons, my colleague, who will introduce himself and Happy Halloween. Thank you. (Applause)

LEWIS PERSONS: Good morning. As Nila said, I'm Lewis Persons. I'm new to the University of South Florida, the Center for Inclusive Communities, but I've been in the field for about 30 years.

And I was pondering what I would talk to you about briefly this morning about transition. I thought probably my number one qualifier is I'm a dad. I have three kids, Matthew 30, Elizabeth 28, and Angela Marie is 23. Matthew, when he went through the school system was labeled with conduct disorder. He flew just under the radar screen of the Department of Juvenile Justice before he had his transition and decided that wasn't his path. Matthew is now the father of four serving in the United States Military. He's about to be deployed to Kuwait to serve his country, and he's a very successful father himself.

My daughter, Elizabeth, 28, was a gifted student in the Leon County School System and felt she was smarter than all the administrators, including her principal at the high school. And

that principal also became the superintendent of the school system, and now she's struggling to become a teacher within Leon County Schools. And she says, "Dad, do you think they remember me in high school?" I said, "Oh, absolutely."

(Laughter) It's never a good sign when the disciplinarian in your high school knows you by your first name and calls you on a regular basis.

Finally, my youngest child, Angela Marie just graduated from college, and she is a special educator in the Wakulla County School System. She's teaching at Crawfordville Elementary. And this is her first year. So I have been around education all my life. I'm a parent, and I'm pleased to be here and share my experiences with you.

But I'm here this morning to introduce our keynote speakers, Norman Kunc and Emma Van der Klift. They are the founders of Broadreach Training & Resources. And they also established Access Consultation and Training Limited and have been kept quite busy around the country, around

the world becoming disability advocates and looking at how do we get people included in their community to be considered not only a person within the community, but integrated into the fabric of our society based on our commonalities, not our differences.

And the bios that I looked at were telling us that, yes, they are known as advocates, but they are taking, I guess, a nontraditional approach, which they're going to share with you about how to get people integrated into the community and how to dispel the myths of persons with disabilities so they can be contributing members of society and enriching the lives of all of us. So without further ado, Norman and Emma, it's yours. (Applause)

NORM KUNC: Good to be here. Just to give you a bit more background about who I am, I, obviously, have cerebral palsy. I went to segregated school for kids with disabilities from kindergarten right up through grade seven. In grade eight, they wanted to put me in a segregated

classroom in regular school about ten miles away from my house. I nixed that idea because I know when you show up at a school in the yellow bus, it destroys any chance you have with the girls.

(Laughter)

So I talked myself into a regular classroom in a regular school. Took all the subjects. I took math and phys ed and art and shop. Yeah, you heard me, right. I did do four years in shop and, yes, I still have all my fingers. My shop teacher became an alcoholic.

(Laughter) But I'm fine.

And then I got myself into regular undergraduate in humanities, a masters in family therapy. My undergraduate degree, a lot of people kept coming up to me and saying, "How did you take notes in class?" "How did you do geometry on a typewriter?" So I wrote a short book on that area on how I solved a lot of the problems. My book got published, and I devoted the remainder in speaking career. So here I am, and that's my background.

Now, can we go forward?

Now, just to offer you proof that I did come from that field, when you have a disability, one of the things that you find that people are always coming up to you and saying, "That's not realistic." From the day I was born I figured out that if you abided by what all the professionals said you'd have a really, really realistic, but really, really boring life.

So I learned at a very young age, ignore what any professional said. I know there are speech therapists in Toronto where I grew up who are still shaking their head going, "Norman insists on being a public speaker. (Laughter) Even though he has a speech impediment. He's still in denial." (Laughter)

So let me give you an example of this idea of being realistic, and then how I dealt with that issue.

I guess the first time I really had to think about what was and what wasn't realistic was in this segregated school. Because in that

segregated school, we all used to play floor hockey together. And we had guys that would crawl, guys on crutches, and guys in wheelchairs. And the guys in wheelchairs would roll over your fingers to get the ball. But your teammate on crutches would usually put a crutch in the guy's spoke. And the guy would go round and round.

(Laughter)

So we had a lot of fun. But there was this one guy named Bennie. Now, Bennie has severe cerebral palsy, so severe, he could only hold one position. And when he got out of that position, all hell broke loose. He could not stop literally until he got in that position.

One day Bennie came over and said, I want to play floor hockey, too. We said, Bennie, you're not being realistic. (Laughter) How are you going to play floor hockey? Put me in net. Bennie ... you go in net, you need hand-eye coordination. You need to move -- okay, okay. So we put Bennie in net. What he used to do is sit there and watch the game. As soon as someone

wound up to take a shot, he would intentionally move so no matter where you shot, Bennie was bound to knock it out. The problem was that Bennie would go into spasms invariably knock the ball in the corner, the ball would stop and Bennie is still going. So what you have to do is blow the whistle, stop the game, and reset Bennie.

(Laughter)

And then the second time I had to think about what was and what wasn't realistic was when I got my driver's license.

After I got my driver's license, a friend of mine who also has cerebral palsy wanted to get his driver's license, too. The problem was with cerebral palsy it affected the right side of his body. He could not move his right foot that fast and he could not move his right hand. And so hand controls were out of the question. So, Jim, how are you going to drive? It takes you five seconds to move your foot from the gas over to the brake. And when a kid jumps out in front of you, you have to brake fast. It's not realistic. Face

your limitations.

Four months later, Jim drove up in some car and after he parked it, I came out. I said, Jim, what are you doing driving? He said, Norman, look under the dash. He had an additional accelerator on the left side of the brake. So the accelerator was normally where a clutch would be. That very simple adaptation he could drive with the left foot rather than the right foot. He was so caught up in being realistic and facing limitations, I prevented myself from seeing a very simple, obvious adaptation that would allow Jim to drive.

So now we're gathered looking at the issue of transition. For me, as a person who is 50 years old with a disability, probably the most important thing I can say to you is the most dangerous words are "not realistic." when we actually say the words "not realistic," what we're really saying is I don't know how to do something. The problem is that when we use those words "not realistic" we change "I don't know how to do

something" into "it can't be done."

And once we decide it can't be done, we stop looking for solutions. So as a person with a disability, I have learned from the very beginning to always be not realistic. Because you see -- the next slide, please -- next slide.

We're living in a qwerty world. How many of you know what the word "qwerty" means? Qwerty is the name of the keyboard most of us use. Because at the top left corner, there are six keys that spell qwerty, q-w-e-r-t-y. Did you guys ever wonder where that name came from, why the keys are laid out on the keyboard in that way?

In 1867 when Christopher Sholes invented the typewriter, he laid out all the keys alphabetically. The problem is that people were typing so fast the keys were jamming. So in 1875 he hired an engineer named Densmore. What Densmore did, he took all the words in the English language and found the letters that were most commonly used and put those letters, not only to the left side of the keyboard -- which is are less

dominant hand for most of us -- not only did he put them on the weakest fingers, but he put them so our weakest fingers had to extend to the key. So the most commonly used letters in the English language of A, S, D, E and R. They are all on the left side of the keyboard using the weakest fingers. Why did they do that? They did it to slow down typists.

Now, with the invention of the electric typewriters, now computers, the issue of jamming keys is irrelevant. What keyboard do we still use? The keyboard that was specifically designed to slow us down. Now, you're probably saying, well, why didn't they change it? They did. In 1937, Augustus Dvorak of the University of Washington did the exact opposite. He took the keys, the letters that are most used in the English language and put them under the strongest fingers of the right hand. So speed typists use this keyboard. They can raise their typing speed anywhere from 100 to 150 percent if you learn on the Dvorak keyboard.

well, what keyboard do all of us use? Qwerty. So we have to recognize that in our society we are trapped in the habits of inefficiency. We do things in a dumb way, because that's the way we have already -- always done it.

Let me give you an example. I love watching non-disabled people make coffee. Funniest thing you've ever seen. I know you're non-disabled and I know you can't help it. You were born that way. But when non-disabled people make coffee, they take the coffee pot out of the coffee maker. They fill it up with water, and then they boil the water, run the coffee pot into the coffee maker, put the coffee pot back in the coffee maker and then turn the coffee maker on. No offense, but that's dumb.

When you have a disability, the world isn't set up for you. You have to find new ways of doing things. And when you find new ways of doing things, you invariably find better ways of doing things.

As any person with poor fine-motor

control, and they will tell you, you position the coffee maker right by the sink so you can fill it up with the sprayer. (Laughter) We often do things in an inefficient way because that's the way we've already done it.

Let me give you another example. How many of you will use the word "processor"? All right. Let's back up.

How many of you can raise your hand? Good. All right. Let's try it again. How many of you use the word "processor"? Good. See, you're not embarrassed. That wasn't traumatic. Let's try it again. How many of you know what auto-correct is? Pretty good. How many of you know how to program auto-correct? Auto correct is a feature in most word processors where if you misspell something, it will automatically take the misspelled word and change it to the correct spelling.

Now, when I saw this, I realized all of the words were a simple find and replace program inserted into a word processor.

Once I figured that out, once I figured out how you could program it, I went, wait a minute! What I did, I went into the menu auto correct and I typed in the word NK. And I told it whenever you see the word "NK" replace it with the word Norman Kunc. So when I write my letter, I just type NK and auto correct replaces it with "Norman Kunc."

So we gave this speech a few months ago in Washington State, and a guy at the back of the audience says, "Oh, my God!" He said, "What's wrong?" "You don't realize, I work for the North America Spina Bifida and the Hydrocephalic Association. Do you know how many times in a day I spell out those words?" (Laughter) "You just saved me half an hour in my working day."

Duh. We live in a qwerty world. We do things in a least efficient way because that's what we have always done. So when we think about intervention or when we think about transition rather, we have to recognize that we live in a qwerty world. And to build on that, Emma is now

going to take over.

EMMA VAN DER KLIFT: Okay. Norm mentioned that people with disabilities are master innovators. You kind of have to be when the world isn't set up for you, right?

Now, one of the limitations that I think those of us in the room who don't have disabilities struggle with is kind of a lack of, if you like, of creativity and innovation. Now, we often think that we're pretty creative and perhaps we're less creative and innovative than we think we are, though.

Now, that wouldn't be a problem, except that when you think about the kind of services that we deliver, we're often the people who are charged to make adaptations and innovations on behalf of people with disabilities. That's where we run into problems. Because our lack of creativity can get in our way. And because we aren't as innovative necessarily as we think we are, some of the things that we do can wind up being really silly. Let me give you an example.

About, oh, I guess in the late '80s, early '90s, I used to go around giving workshops on employment equity and affirmative action. One of the people I worked with for a while was a guy named Richard Pimentel. Now, Richard Pimentel, in addition to being a trainer, was also a consultant. He consulted a lot to Fortune 500 corporations. He consulted with them on the issue of employment equity and affirmative action.

He told a story about being called into a Fortune 500 corporation that shall remain nameless to look at an adaptation for one of its employees there on an affirmative action program. Now, they were involved in something called "right sizing." I'm sure all of you know that's a euphemism for layoff and downsizing.

Anyhow, one of the guys that they were going to retain because he was on this affirmative action program was a guy who had had one arm amputated somewhere above the elbow. They wanted to expand and change his job duties, but they didn't know how to do it. They wanted him to do

filing. So they called in Rich. And they said, you know, help us figure out how to adapt so that this guy can do filing.

You know, when you stop and think about it, I guess maybe filing is a two-handed job. I'm not really sure. You have to open the file drawer. You pull the files back. You put another file in. You close the door.

So Richard came in. He listened to what they wanted him to do. And he said, can you give me five minutes?

So he went downstairs and he found this guy. And he said, well, you know, the big boys upstairs want you to do filing. Ever done any? The guy says, yeah, I file at home all the time. well, how do you do it? He says it's easy. I pull open the file drawer. I take a ruler, jam it in there, pick up the file, take the ruler out, close the file drawer. Richard says, may I borrow that? The guy said, sure. So he goes back upstairs and says, here is your adaptive device. That will be \$5,000 plus expenses. Thank you.

(Laughter)

We do some ridiculous things when we're trying to make adaptations on behalf of people.

Let me give you another example and kind of involve you in it for a minute. Imagine that you are Norman's teacher or whoever, and you've decided that it would be a really good idea for Norm to learn computer skills this year. Now, you want to figure out what keyboard is best for him. Okay. Keep that in mind.

First of all, I want to show you something. Could you put your hands up, please? What do you notice about this guy's hands? Huge. Yeah, big, huge. You want to get a sense of scale here. Here we go. How big? Really big. Okay.

What would you be thinking about in designing a keyboard for Norman? Yeah, me, too. However, I want to show you the keyboard that Norman actually uses. Oops. This is so small that I can't possibly type on it. When I try to do that, I make a lot of mistakes because my fingers will overlap. And I need you to know that

I have relatively small hands.

You see, what you wouldn't know if you hadn't seen Norm typing is that the way in which he uses this is by bracing both hands on either side of it and using his thumb and forefinger to type. So, again, when we don't involve people and we don't ask, we tend to make big mistakes.

So, how many of you know who this is? Besides the fact that it says Evelyn Glennie at the bottom of the overhead. This is, indeed, Evelyn Glennie. She's probably one of the world's premier classical and alternative percussionists. She's a drummer. What you would not know by looking at Evelyn Glennie is that she is profoundly deaf.

Now, like many of you, I get how a deaf person could play, for example, the tympani. Because from my deaf friends I know a little bit about how sound moves through objects and into the body, et cetera. But here is the thing.

We were watching Evelyn Glennie in a documentary not that long ago. She was in her

studio in Scotland. And she was testing out cymbals, walking around the studio with the sticks in her hand like you see in the picture, testing out cymbals for a piece she was about to perform. She would walk up to the cymbals and lightly tap them and listen, and she would go, no, that one has too much sizzle. I understand how a person who is deaf can play the timpani. What I don't understand is how a person who is profoundly deaf knows which cymbal has not enough or too much sizzle. Hold that thought.

How many of you know who this is? This is Danny del Cambre. For any of you foodies, he's a world-renowned chef who actually trained under Paul Perdone. Initially, he had a very high-end restaurant in Seattle called the Ragin' Cajun. And in more recent years, he operates a very chichi catering business, and he also goes out on the road to speak.

What you wouldn't know by looking at Danny del Cambre is that he is also profoundly deaf. All right. I know what you're thinking,

right?

A deaf person being a chef, that's a no-brainer. What you would also not know by looking at him is that he is also blind. I get how a deaf person can cook. I also get how a blind person can cook with enough adaptations and organization.

What I don't get is how a deaf and blind person can cook without in the process becoming a double amputee. But there you have it.

I actually think it is a very good thing that I was not either Evelyn or Danny's transition planning person. Because, quite frankly, I think I lack the imagination to have supported them fully in their choice of careers. Now, that being said, you know, probably like all of you, I have some reasonable social skills. And when confronted with someone who wants to do something that I think is not realistic, you know, I'm not inclined to say, no, you can't do that, but I'm more inclined to do something like this. Lean forward, smile, and say, great! And what else?

Hoping desperately that there is a what else that this person wants to do, right?

We often don't ask people what they want to do when they finish school, although those of you in transition hopefully are doing that. And I think sometimes we don't ask because we're worried about what it is that people might say. We're worried that they are going to ask for something that we find terribly unrealistic, and we're not going to want to rain on their parade. So instead we sort of skirt around the issue. Now, maybe you're thinking that -- pardon me? Oh, yeah, right. I almost forgot about Paul. I think, actually, I'll do the other one first.

Okay. Maybe you're thinking that everybody isn't an Evelyn Glennie and everyone isn't a Paul Perdone -- or pardon me, a Danny del Cambre and you would be right. All of us in this room are not those people and maybe most of us in this room aren't nearly as talented as those people.

So what about ordinary people? Let me

give you one final story. This story came to us from our friend, Judith Snow, in Ontario, Canada.

Judith is a woman with a significant disability. She needs assistance in almost every aspect of her life. As a result, Judith is an innovator. Again, she's had to be.

Now, one day Judith was actually working in a transition planning committee to assist a young man named John who was leaving school, young man with a developmental disability, and they asked him, what do you want to be when you finish school? He said, I want to be an astronaut.

well, I don't know about you, but I think my heart might have gone down to my boots at that point, because, let's face it, there are like 12 people in the world who are astronauts and they all have, like, three Ph.D.s. What are the odds of this young man with a developmental disability becoming an astronaut? But Judith was not as easily deterred as I would have been. She said, okay, what do you need to know if you want to be an astronaut? He said, well, I guess you

need to know things about outer space and you'd need to know things about space ships. Great, where can you get that?

To make a long story a little bit shorter, they went to the planetarium. They were early for the show and while they were in the lobby, the manager came out and he started talking to them. He said, wow, that's really cool. You know what, right now, I really could use some volunteer ushers, and that could work into a paying job. Are you interested?

So until last year when they closed the planetarium for some reason, if you had gone to the Toronto Planetarium, you would have seen John. He would have been the guy in the NASA space suit that would have shown you to your seat. I hope you're not thinking, ahh, isn't that sweet. The young man with a mental disability thinks he's an astronaut. No, John knew he wasn't an astronaut. He said, I still want to be an astronaut, but right now, this is really cool. would any of that have happened if we had told John that that just

wasn't realistic and gone on to Plan B immediately? Probably not.

Now, you might notice that the guy on the far right, sort of two people over from Norm, this is a guy named Paul Malon. The far left. Sorry, my right, your left. Anyway, that's Paul Malon.

Now, when Paul Malon grew up, he's, obviously, a guy with a disability as well. When he grew up, he became a pathologist. He's currently a working pathologist in the Vancouver area. Now, maybe you're thinking, isn't that cool? A guy with a disability became a doctor and then a pathologist. That's really unusual, isn't it?

That's not the unusual thing about Paul Malon. Paul Malon, yep, he's a pathologist. He does a good job at what he does. But here is what Paul Malon does during his time off. Now, I've got to tell you that he's completely paralyzed from the waist down and he has limited use of his hands, okay?

This is what Paul Malon does on his time off. He gets himself helicoptered up to the top of the most remote mountains, and he camps by himself. And he moves around and takes photography. He's actually a very well-known outdoor photographer. He takes a lot of pictures of mountains. He's been in places that most of us will never, ever go.

Once again, if you were Paul Malon's transition planning person, how would you respond to his desire to be airlifted onto a mountain all by himself for two weeks every year? But there it is.

So, looking at all of these situations, I guess as a nondisabled person or as nondisabled people, we have to think about how we're going to respond. And in situations like this, I'll tell you what I do. I try to remember good ol' Socrates. You guys all remember who Socrates was? Yeah.

Socrates was a philosopher and he used to like to engage his students in something called

the Socratic debate. Basically, the Socratic debate went something like this.

He would assemble a group of students or acolytes, and he would ask them to debate a question, a big question. He would say to them something like, what is beauty or what is truth? And then he would sit back and watch while his students debated this until they came up with a definition. Sometimes this took days, right? All night and all day. Finally, they would come up with a definition, and Socrates would say, invariably, nope. And here's why. And he would proceed to poke holes in every argument that they had put forward.

Now, I've always had a visual image of those poor students of Socrates lying on the floor like demoralized puddles, finally getting up and looking at him and saying, okay, you think you're so smart, what is truth then? what is beauty?

And Socrates would say, I don't know. But at least I know that I don't know. The real truth is, we don't know what's possible for

people. And if we start talking about what is and is not realistic prematurely or at all, we stand the chance of severely limiting somebody's opportunities later on.

Because, quite frankly, we don't know. So given that perhaps we don't know and now we know that we don't know, what do we do? Nothing? No. Obviously not. We do a number of things.

First of all, we assume competence. We need to assume competence. And sometimes that can be challenging, especially with people who don't speak, for example. But we need to assume that we don't know. I think a lot of the stuff that we're learning out of brain research right now, for example, about people with autism tells us that we don't know very much about how human beings are put together or how the brain works.

The second thing we need to do is to listen to people. It sounds simple, but it's not always as simple as it seems, is it? And we need to listen to people and ask them to be very, very highly involved in whatever is going on for them.

Oh, no, we don't have Scott here? Not yet. All right.

The next thing is -- well, I'll skip over to this. We need to learn to think like Houdini. You know, a lot of people have role models for creativity. People like Einstein and da Vinci and, you know, those are sort of the common role models for being really creative.

Norman and I, we have a different role model. We like Harry Houdini. Do you guys all remember Harry Houdini? Yeah, the great escape artist. We like Houdini because Houdini delighted in doing what other people thought was impossible.

NORM KUNC: Can I add one thing? One of the things why we like Houdini is invariably when you try in transition, if you follow this idea, defiantly not being realistic, you are going to hit obstacles. Many people go, oh, that won't work. I guess you can't do that. With a disability, obstacles means your life ends. When I see an obstacle, rather than quit, that's when I start thinking, and that's the usefulness of Harry

Houdini.

EMMA VAN DER KLIFT: Absolutely. Harry Houdini, again, would delight in doing what people thought was impossible. So, for example, Houdini would say, lock me up in chains. Put big padlocks on and then get police officers to check those padlocks to make sure that they are actually real and that I'm not just faking this. And he would go away and for a couple of months he would practice until he could get himself out of those padlocks. When he was done, he would do that in front of people and everybody would go "oohh" and "ahh," and they would say how wonderful that is. But Harry Houdini didn't rest on his laurels. He said, okay, that was fun. Now, make it harder.

He would say put me in a milk can, lock me up in chains, and let me see what I can do with that. When he finished doing that, everyone was amazed and said "ooh" and "ahh," and he said, not good enough. Put me upside down and put me into a vat of ice cold water in chains, and let me see if I can do that.

Harry Houdini always wanted it to be made harder, and he kept saying, whatever people think is possible is impossible is possible.

what do you think would happen if Harry Houdini had been a transition planning person or the Executive Director of an organization or the superintendent of a school, when people come and say, you know, that's not possible, Harry Houdini would have said, ha, watch me. We need to learn to think like Houdini.

Again, include the person in the process. In every aspect of the process, we need to listen to people. Give you a quick example.

Sometimes Norman and I do workshops on behavior, and one of the things we talk about is providing students and teachers with what we call a runaway lane.

Do you guys know what a runaway lane is? we asked that question in Nebraska once and nobody did. We figured out that was because Nebraska is very flat. Well, we come from a place with a lot of mountains. And a runaway lane is something

that you'll see quite often around the top of a mountain.

what it is, it's a laneway that goes off the highway and kind of back up the mountain and ends in a net. And what it is, it's a safe place for a truck if the truck happens to lose its brakes to kind of swerve into and come to a safe stop so it doesn't careen down the mountain and take out a small town in the process, right? So that's a runaway lane.

we often talk about providing runaway lanes for people. I want to give you an example of a runaway lane. Because this is also an example of how a group of people talked to a student who was failing terribly, and actually managed to assist that student to participate and actually design their own behavioral supports. Sometimes we talk about transition planning in terms of what's going to happen for someone after school, but we very seldom think about including people who are struggling with behavioral issues in their own planning.

This is Scott. And beside him is Rich Villa. Now, Rich Villa, the guy on your right, my left, used to be the Director of Special Education in the Winooski School District. Scott is a student who was probably the most difficult student that Rich ever met. He basically catapulted himself out of every educational setting he had ever been in. The last time I think by jumping from a height of four feet on to the principal's foot and breaking a number of small, but important bones. Scott was failing out terribly.

Rich went to Scott one day and said, how can we help you to be successful? And he had to continue to ask that question because Scott was pretty nervous of responding to teachers by that time.

Eventually, Scott came into a session with him. He said, you know what, first of all, I want you to know something, I really hate it when I lose it. It's like something bubbles up inside me. It explodes. I feel terrible. I do all

kinds of things I wish I hadn't done. I'm embarrassed afterwards. I hate it when I lose it. I want you to know that. Here's what I need.

when I feel that feeling coming up inside me, what I want to be able to do is I want to be able to leave the room, go to a room by myself or with a person that I trust just until I can feel calmer again. So Rich said, "That's it?" He said, "Yeah, that's it."

So he went back to the teachers and told them, and the teachers said, "We can't do that. How do we know he's not going to do that to get out of work? And what do we do if the other kids want to do it, too?"

Rich said, "You know, I know we're frustrated, but let's try something." And the teachers, to their credit, did.

when we met Scott, he was on a panel of kids. He had just graduated. He had a job. Here's Scott at graduation. He had a job. And he said this. He said, you know, I still lose it sometimes, but these days, it's kind of like I

know what to do.

And as people who work with individuals, doesn't that spark some interest in you? Isn't that what we're talking about when we're talking about moving from an external to an internal locus of control? In other words, self-management. These are the things we need to look at. Involve people, involve people. Ask people in every aspect of their lives.

We actually met with a group of counselors called NEADS. I can't remember what the acronym stands for, but they are the people who provide supports and services to students entering university and college. And they said to us, we've got really good news for you, and we've got some bad news for you. The good news is that more and more students with disabilities are entering college and university. The bad news is that they are really, really passive. They sit and wait for us to do things.

Sometimes they'll sit, if we let them, for six months out of the year waiting for us to

solve the problems they run into. Some of that learned helplessness has been prior created and not by that individual but by us. The people who are around that person.

We step into every situation. We don't involve people. We create all of those supports for them. And we think that's what it means to do a good job when, in fact, what we're creating is a person who can't function without us. Not a very good idea.

So, finally --

NORM KUNC: Innovation delivers what rehabilitation promises. Let me give you an example. When you're disabled, a lot of nondisabled people try to make you nondisabled, more like them because they always assume being nondisabled is better than being disabled. It sounds like a strange variation of penis envy. (Laughter) All the men assume that women at the bottom of their heart really want to be men.

We have this idea that we should make disabled people less disabled. So we work on

remediation, and we work and we work and we think the less disabled a person is, the better their life will be. After 50 years of living with a disability, one of the truths I've figured out is this: Innovation delivers what rehabilitation promises. Let me give you an example.

If you go on to Google and you do a search on Miracle Leagues, you'll find dozens of web sites on Miracle Leagues. Miracle Leagues are segregated baseball teams for children with disabilities. Their theme is, you see, is every child deserves a chance to play baseball. Now, I'm sure you're going, what's wrong with that? I mean, isn't that a great thing?

If you go on these web sites you will find picture after picture after picture with variations of the picture in the bottom left-hand corner. What you'll see over and over and over, kids playing with -- not other kids, adults. It's like I said, I went to a segregated school. The kids at the segregated -- they'll never, ever play baseball, because when they pitch the ball across

the plate and the guy actually managed to hit the ball, it usually takes the third baseman about five minutes to walk over to the ball and throw it to the first baseman. He usually missed them by a mile which then necessitated the first baseman to spend another five minutes to go over and get the ball. A game of nine innings could take five months. (Laughter) So we never ever played baseball.

Now, when I was at the university I was sitting in a pub with a bunch of friends. One of my friends said, hey, Norm, after lunch, a bunch of us are going out to play a pickup game of baseball. Do you want to come with us? Yeah, right, me play baseball. They said, don't worry, we can figure it out. We've had enough beer. (Laughter)

And we did. By the time we left the pub and got to the baseball diamond, we had it figured out. What we did, my friends and I stood at home plate and we both ran to first base. One was nondisabled, so obviously, he got there first.

when he got there, he'd -- how much longer it took me to get to first base. We found out it took me 12 seconds longer to get to first base.

Once we knew that, I could play baseball. Because what we would do, I would get up to bat, hit the ball, they would catch, go one, two, three, four and I'd run like hell, because they knew when they got up to 12, they would try to throw me out. Now, we shortly figured out we needed two more rules. If I made it safe to first, I could stand halfway to second as a head start. And the third rule was the runner behind me could run past me. (Laughter) So if I was on first and the next guy up hit a triple, I could stay on second. (Laughter)

But with those three rules, I could play baseball. And the rules made it fair. No one let me win. Everyone was simply kind to me, we made it fair. Because it was fair and authentic, it was fun for everyone.

Now, I tell you about one of the leverages that many physical terrorists -- I mean,

therapists, many physical therapists use was baseball. They go, you want to play baseball? Do you? Like any kid, I go yeah, yeah, yeah. And they say, well, you got to do physical therapy to learn how to run to play baseball. I did all the physical therapy. I never learned to run, so I never thought I could play baseball.

Innovation delivered the rehabilitation promises. So when we look at trying to support someone to live in the community or to find a job, rather than trying to look at how we make a person less disabled, how do we become innovative.

For example, we have a friend in Madison, Wisconsin, who was supporting a young woman with a very severe mental and physical disability to get a job. What they figured out was -- well, the situation with this young woman could not read. But they got her a job delivering mail.

How does a person who can't read deliver mail? Well, what happened was -- they had a picture of every secretary in the appropriate

slot. And so she would simply match the pictures up with the secretary and dump out the mail. Same person, person with a mental disability who had a strange habit of being fascinated with fires. He got kicked out of every job they got him because he was always lighting fires, pardon the pun, he was getting fired.

They are going, how can we get this guy a job? They tried to work on his pyromania. Nothing worked. Innovation delivers what rehabilitation promises. They got him a job at a fire station where he got very into -- he was around fires a lot, or at least the general idea of fires. It was being able to think outside of the box, innovation delivered what rehabilitation promised.

Go back down to --

Now, once you're involving the person, once you're trying to be innovative, the other thing we've learned is you untie the knot. If you untie the knots, the rope will untangle itself. Very often, when you look at setting up a

successful transition, what you usually see is a whole number of problems and complications lying in front of you.

And very often, those complications are so varied and there seem to be so many of them, it's a bit discouraging. You go, there's no way I can do this. Oh, yeah, as a disabled person, no is not an option, because everything in life depends on figuring out a way to do this. Now, what I've learned comes from my experience sailing.

You can always tell a sailor from a non-sailor. You give a non-sailor a piece of tangled rope and they'll wrestle with it and wrestle with it and wrestle with it and get the rope even more tangled.

what sailors learn very quickly is that when you have a piece of tangled rope, you take the end of the rope, you untie the first knot, untie the second knot, and untie the third knot and let the rope untangle itself.

It's the same when you're involved with

transition. Although you may see a number of complicated issues in front of you, just work on one knot at a time. The rope will untangle itself. About six years ago, I fell down and broke my ankle right before a six-week road trip. And whenever I was working at home, I was going on the road alone.

I then knew with all the complexities of getting through airports and hotels and restaurants and stages and all the implications of traveling. Oh, no, I had no idea how I was going to manage those six weeks. I was terrified.

But what I kept saying was, don't worry about the tangled rope. Untie the knot. And that's the way I dealt with it. I didn't worry about problems that might come up tomorrow or the next day or even on the next flight, I worried about dealing with the situation in front of me. The trip went off beautifully. My biggest danger was being caught in my own fear. Because I was able to just focus on the knot, the rope untangled itself.

If at first you don't succeed --

Audience: Try again.

NORM KUNC: Wrong. (Laughter) Try another way. Us human beings are strange creatures. When we try to do something and it doesn't work out, you would think that we try to do something in a different way. Wrong.

what we do is the same thing with greater intensity. The best example of this is when you -- when I got my graduate degree, go out and eat at family restaurants because they are cheap. what always used to amaze me is families would come in with young kids. And whatever discipline problem they would be having with their kid, whatever discipline strategies they used, if that didn't work, they wouldn't change to a new strategy. So if the kid was misbehaving the parent would yell and yelling doesn't work. They would yell louder.

You got the people who abided by positive reinforcement and said if you'll be really good we'll get you a nice dessert. And if

that didn't work, the reward got bigger and bigger. If you eat all your food, we'll go out and buy you a toy after we -- I see kids walk into a restaurant with an IOU for a BMW. (Laughter) what I do as a person with a disability, very often we get caught in our own way of seeing things. And our usual way of doing so.

Let me give you an example of this.

When I was living on my own, one of the first things I did was I worked on learning how to make Kraft dinner. All right. Because I'm a guy. I work on small steps towards cooking. All right?

Now, the relative work of making Kraft dinner, is you have to boil macaroni. Now, in case you weren't aware of this, scalding water and cerebral palsy don't go together that well.

(Laughter)

So I realized that if I did what my physiotherapist -- or my occupational therapist told me, be determined, don't give up -- that may not be a successful strategy. Because, oops, there I have first-degree burns. Oh, there I have

second-degree burns. Oh, there I have third-degree burns. Not a good idea.

So what I did, I took all the utensils I use to boil macaroni and laid them out on the table and looked at them. There's got to be another way of doing this.

After five minutes, a light bulb went on. Bing! I put the uncooked macaroni in the strainer, and I put the entire strainer in the pot of boiling water. I boiled the macaroni and then I lifted the strainer out and the pot of boiling water stayed over there. (Laughter) Where it couldn't hurt me. See, determination is only for those people who lack creativity.

In my high school and undergraduate degree, I used to play tournament chess. And when you play serious chess, what you are taught to do is study the board. And when you see a good move, you write it down. And then you look for what is called the second good move. Because the move -- the good move that you saw your opponent probably has also seen that. So you look for the second

good move. And what they say is, you have to get rid of that first good move so you can clear your mind for what's most obvious to be truly creative. That's what blocks our creativity, our habit to do what is obvious.

What are ways that I can push myself to get rid of -- or to move beyond the obvious to what is truly more creative? And here's what I came up with. Brainstorming alternatives. What you do first of all is take a problem. Take a problem you're dealing with.

It might be transition. If it's a transition problem, it may be a social challenge. It may be challenge or an employment living arrangement. Take a problem you're struggling with, write it down.

Now, secondly, write down the ways you tried to solve that problem. And when you write down the ways that you've tried that have been unsuccessful to solve the problem, don't do those things because they haven't worked!

Once you have all the unsuccessful ways

that you have tried to solve the problem, write down the numbers one through ten, and your job here is to come up with ten options, ten alternatives that you can do to solve that problem.

Now, here's what is going to happen. When you try to think of alternatives, the first four or five will be really easy. Then your brain will stop. You have to keep pushing yourself, right? You may have to dip into the Jack Daniels, but you keep pushing yourself. Six, seven, eight will be tricky. Eight, nine and ten, smoke will be coming out of your ears. The Jack Daniels will be long gone, but eight, nine and ten, I guarantee, will be your best answers. Because they will be the least obvious and usually your most creative answers.

This may seem simple, but do not underestimate its power, because this forces you to go beyond -- go beyond the usual. And to really look at the truly innovative ideas and do the things and expose that what everyone thought

was unrealistic is, in fact, very doable and very realistic.

So final point is this: which dog do you feed? There's a story that goes, I have two dogs. One is mean. One dog's name is mean. One dog's name is happy. They are always fighting within me. Which dog do you think usually wins? And the answer is: The one you feed the most.

In transition planning, the two dogs are, one is easiest and one is best. Those two dogs are always fighting. Do we do what's easy, food, flowers, filth and flyers, or do we really do what is best? Do we really look at what's possible for people? Which dog do we feed? Because if we feed the easy dog, the easy dog will become stronger. But if we feed what's doing best, that dog becomes stronger.

So we have to always monitor ourselves and when we say, no, that's not realistic, no, that's too hard, no, there's that obstacle. Which dog are we feeding? Which dog are we making stronger?

A final story, and then we will show a video. How did you get off so easy this week? We got the order mixed up and usually Emma does a lot more and I had to do three-quarters.

We have a friend who was a behavioral consultant. Behavioral S.W.A.T. team. (Laughter) He was called into this residence, this group home one day because one of the individuals that lived in the group home was being really defiant about not wanting to go to the day program. All she wanted to do was sit at home and watch soap operas. And the staff went, no! You can't do that! Because if we're not allowed to do that, sure as hell we're not going to let you do that.

So they called in the behavioral specialist, make her do what we want her to do, but don't let her know we're doing it to her. So our friend went, no, why don't we do -- why don't we work with it? why don't we use soap operas as a vehicle to help her live in the community?

So one thing they did, they put an ad in the local paper requesting to see if any people,

primarily women were interested to getting together in afternoons and watch soap operas. You can imagine what kind of response they got. They were flooded with letters. So they did a screening, and they ended up with about ten or twelve women who were all interested in getting together as an informal group and every afternoon, five or six of them would get together, including this one woman with a disability.

And they would go to one of the person's house and watch all the soap operas together. They go from one to the other to the other, *General Hospital*, *As the World Turns*, and whatever. And they kept calling each other at night. The romances and Luke and Laura. Luke and Laura is still going on! And they are back. Luke and Laura are back. (Laughter) That's the beauty of those stories. You don't have to watch soap operas to come up with current things.

well, sure enough, this young woman got included in this network of women around soap operas. And that became the vehicle for her

getting involved in church groups in the larger community.

But take someone who was willing, if you will, feed the different dog. Because the day program was the easy option. But you -- this worked because someone was feeding a different dog. That person was looking at what is best rather than what is easiest.

For the next day and a half as you work through planning processes, I would ask you to keep asking yourself: which dog am I feeding? Am I doing what is easiest or am I doing what is best?

Am I being caught up in not being realistic or do I have the courage to be realistic? Do I have the courage to be unrealistic? Am I becoming demoralized by the tangled ropes or am I untying the knots? Am I assuming competence? Am I involving the person in their own planning session?

All of these things I have learned from being disabled. We all learn from being around

people with disabilities. Disability -- is not a struggle with -- against adversity. It's an ingenious way of living. The key in transition is to really embrace the attitude of ingenuity. For the next day and a half, practice thinking like Houdini. Delight in doing what everybody else thinks is impossible. I think you will truly start to create the dreams that people will live with the rest of their lives.

So then what we would like to do is show you a short video, and would you introduce it while I set it up?

EMMA VAN DER KLIFT: At least I can do this. This video actually came about as a result of a project that Norman and I were asked to consult on. We were asked to write a chapter in a book for people newly entering the field of human services, giving them our advice, whatever that might be.

And being the people that we are, you know, we got up on the morning that the thing was due and realized we had better get it in. We

hadn't started yet. So we got a big pot of coffee and started working on it. But we didn't have a lot of time to write a whole bunch of paragraphs. So what we did instead was don't do this, do that. Don't do this, do that. So we sent it off and it got published.

Few weeks later, Norm was playing with PowerPoint and said look at what I just did with what we wrote. And what he had done is made it into a slide show. Now, in the following weeks, he actually set it to music. And we played it for people, and they seemed to like it. So we turned it into a video. And that was fine. That went on for a number of years. And about a year ago, we got a call from a People First organization in San Luis Obispo in California and they asked, because they really cared about what we had written, they asked if they could say the words and provide us with a visual, because we'd only ever had the words scrolling down the page. And what you're going to see today is kind of the sum of the first credo of support which we wrote eight or ten years

ago done by the People First organization of San Luis Obispo. We think it's much better.

[Video shown]

NORM KUNC: So usually what happens is we barely finish under the wire. This time we'll actually finish 15 minutes early. So we'll do questions and answers.

Before we do that, for those of you who are interested in getting the DVD -- why isn't this working? HA! It's available through the Special Needs Bookstore and you can order through specialneeds.com. So questions. Comments.

There are microphones. If you feel like playing Jerry Springer. (Laughter)

EMMA VAN DER KLIFT: No guts, no glory.

NORM KUNC: Well --

SPEAKER: My question for Norm and Emma is, you shared with us a lot of examples of how to approach this and which dog to feed, but it seems that with the more complex a person's disability, the more complex the cognitive component is -- the more time it's going to take and that there are

ways to bring out the best -- but people's time is so limited and then you're going to spend a long time with each student, but then you will leave the other students behind.

And I hear that from staff a lot that everyone here wants to do the right thing. Everyone here wants to bring out the best in every student they work with, but then it becomes so time-consuming and so laborious that they do start to take some of the shortcuts and it's just like a matter of necessity. How do you propose that they try to overcome that?

NORM KUNC: I'll give you one idea and then you can -- the examples in Toronto where I most closely worked with transition planning, what we found was critical was when you have an individual making transition you try to expand the network of people who are supporting that individual in the process.

Very often when we worked with high school students rather than just having the transition person and the parents, maybe teacher,

we go to the parents and say, are there any other siblings, family, friends, relatives, neighbors, who would be interested in being invited into this process? And so what we found is that a lot of people are very touched and very enthusiastic to join the team, as it were.

So I think one of the reasons why transition people feel overwhelmed is they are trying to do everything themselves. They figure, this is my job as a professional. We have to redefine that. We have to recognize that the best way this is done is when you involve that person's network of friends, family, et cetera.

And not only that, not only do you get their energy, you get their connections. They know someone who runs a print shop. They know someone who might work at the dealership or whatever.

We have to look at the incredible power that is there within the community around that person.

EMMA VAN DER KLIFT: I don't have too

much to add because that's pretty much what I would have said as well. In my experience, especially in working in supported employment, one of the unexpected offshoots of doing precisely what Norm has just suggested is that you not only get the person's connections but you also get unexpected creativity. Because, you know, we have a culture out there still that says that working with people with disabilities requires some sort of special training and that, you know, it should be left up to those of us who have that training and experience.

And we can find ourselves tired and blocked, you know, because we are doing so much with so little. And in a very rushed time frame. We found that employers were often really adept at helping us figure out really unusual ways of supporting somebody. And often the people that we thought would be the most resistant were the people who were the most helpful. So, again, you know, you get the added bonus of people who haven't learned to think about things in the way

that we have. And so they go, well, why couldn't you do, da, da, da? Oh, well, maybe we could.

Other comments, questions?

SPEAKER: I have a suggestion. Just on the flip side, because I know you're talking about a person that is working with those individuals, as an individual and a parent. I can tell you when we've gone and we've kind of felt like a person has spread themselves way too thin, that would have been a really good suggestion of bringing in other people. Or, you know, what can we do to expand that network or is there anybody else in this school that is willing to take on a position that they weren't thinking about before?

Because I think the problem is that when you go to your facilitator and you ask them the questions that you're supposed to ask as parents and as a student who is trying to advocate for themselves, what happens is you go to them thinking they have all the answers. And either they have the answers, and they think in the back of their minds, oh, God, I cannot take on one more

thing with this. And you see them shut down.

You know right then and there, that's it. They are not going to help you anymore. What would be so much better is if we could just be honest enough because as human beings, we do get tired. We do know that ourselves are stretched thin. We have kids at home. People are divorced, going through a divorce. They have lousy support systems of their own. So everybody has their own baggage that they carry around.

And being human beings and just saying to that individual, hey, you know what, I would love to take this on 100% with you, but I'm going to need help with this. Can you give me some time, networks and strategies with each other?

And the most important thing, talk to the person with the disability and ask them specifically what is it that you need that is not being met and then try and move on with it. Because I think the hardest thing is, as a parent, is being told there's no answer. And when the truth of the matter is, there's probably an answer

out there, there's just not enough time to find it.

EMMA VAN DER KLIFT: Thank you. I guess what you're talking about, again, is engaging authentically with each other. This is something that we're all in together for the long haul. Thank you.

SPEAKER: I have to reinforce that. When we engage -- first of all, when we talk to parents and caregivers that are engaged in the network of the students that we work with. It opens up a whole world to them.

And for me, working with the community, they were always receptive to what we were doing and, in fact, looked at us and, personally, I felt they were looking for a way to contribute and we opened a door, when we present ourselves to them as someone working with students who need entry into the community --

NORM KUNC: Can everyone hear this?

SPEAKER: No.

SPEAKER: Can we give you a microphone?

SPEAKER: What I was saying was, when we engaged the networks of these students that we work with. First of all, it's an epiphany for the parents and the stakeholders, because they don't realize that is a resource.

But I've always found that when I work with the community, they were so receptive to what I was proposing to them and, in fact, looked for people like us to give back to their communities. And we open the door for them.

They were always grateful to me. They always seemed grateful for me to be there and actually open the door for them to contribute back. And they were, in my opinion, more receptive than the people I work with in the school system I work in.

They were much more easy to work with. They had much more creativity. They were ready to do anything you said. And wow, it worked. I mean, the networks are powerful. Letting the parents know they are there and opening up the community, they are ready for us. We just have to

present ourselves appropriately.

EMMA VAN DER KLIFT: You know, on that note, we knew a guy, young guy with a mental disability who got a job -- I guess it was a warehouse or something and the employer was really receptive, was a great guy. This young man was not verbal and he occasionally had behavioral outbursts.

And on one occasion, he locked himself into the bathroom of the back of this warehouse and completely trashed the bathroom. I mean, the toilet was up. The sink was off the wall. The support person who was in there with him was absolutely undone, thought, okay, this is the end of everything.

And when they went in to survey the damage, the employer came up, and the support worker apologized profusely and said, oh, we'll never let this happen again.

The employer said, I'm not blaming him. I'm blaming you guys. How come -- this is a young person who has hit the age of 22 years and does

not have any way to communicate when he's feeling upset? What's the matter with you guys that you didn't give him a communication system? Whoa.

And this is from someone who had never had any background or experience with disability.

So one of the reasons for my point is, that sometimes people in the community see things very differently, as you pointed out. And also, to underscore the point that wherever possible, if we can find, develop, nurture, maintain communication systems for people, it's probably one of the primary civil rights. If you can communicate in any way, you're going to be better off than if you can't. So if it's at all possible, if we spend any time on anything, look for ways for people to communicate as well.

NORM KUNC: One final thing I want to say that I forgot, a lot of times people come up to me and ask me what I call the "Oprah question." And the "Oprah question" goes something like this. What's the most important attribute that you have to which you attribute your success as a disabled

person? And I go, uh, uh, uh, single malt scotch.

(Laughter)

EMMA VAN DER KLIFT: Don't laugh. It only encourages him.

NORM KUNC: That's not good enough, right, because when you're disabled, people expect you to be profound. So I had to come up with a prepared answer. What I realized is a lot of my success is attributable to my ability to initiate the support I need.

First day of math class, a math teacher would be totally terrified of having me in the class given I can't write and can't draw. And they are going, oh, my God, how is this guy going to do geometry? And I go up and say, give me a list of all the symbols, the mathematical symbols that we will be using throughout the year. I'd go home and make a code of which typewriter symbol meant which mathematical symbol. So GTE meant greater to or equal than, or a red number meant the power of. I go in there the next day, hand the person the code and say, there, you follow

that, we'll be fine. (Laughter)

That ability to initiate the support I need has paid off in school. It's paid off in job interviews, workplaces, even on my sailboat. Because, first of all, not only does it relieve people's pressure to try to outthink me and be a psychic, but it also indicates a degree of initiative and self-confidence on my part.

If I was supporting an individual with a disability in making transition, there are probably two questions I would ask.

The first question: what's your dream? what do you really, really, really want to do?

And the second question I would ask is: what can I do to help you? And the person would likely say, "I don't know." And I'd probably say, well, what would you say if you did know?

Because when I say, what should I do, the person will very likely believe I'm asking what's the right thing to do. If I said what would you say if you did know -- I'm giving the person the opportunity to give their opinion.

If they still said, "I don't know," I'd behave like a waiter and would offer the person the menu. Well, I can do this, I can do this, I can do this, I can do this. Which of these do you think would be most helpful? I think the more that we can encourage people to develop the skill to initiate the support they need, the more they'll be able to create a wonderful life for themselves. It's the same ol' story of rather than giving someone a fish, teach them how to fish. Take care people. Thank you. Bye-bye.

(Rising applause)

NILA BENITO: We're going to take a 15-minute break, but I have a couple of quick announcements. Judy Dunning and Sharon Morris, I need you to report to the registration desk. For the facilitators in all of the meeting rooms, please, put the latch for your door, so your door doesn't close all the way, so when the hosts come by, they don't have to knock on the door and disturb you.

And for all of our content experts,

that's all our speakers today, we need you to
report to the Atlantic Room now.

[Recess]

*** LEADERSHIP TEAM PRESENTATION: DISCOVERY ***

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2007

10:30 A.M.

JOYCE LUBBERS: Good morning. My name is Joyce Lubbers, and I work with the Florida Department of Education, the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services. I'm happy to be here today. I'm delighted to see everyone here today, coming together to work as teams to support the transition process statewide. It's a wonderful opportunity to think about what's going on in our districts across all of our partnerships and move those opportunities for students forward.

With the Florida Department of Education, I just wanted to give you a little bit of information about what the focus is for school districts and looking at transition.

School districts are working with a state performance plan. The state performance plan is a set of 20 indicators that the State of Florida uses to report the progress of students

with disabilities to the Office of Special Education Service Programs in Washington, D.C.

The 20 indicators guide what the school districts do, and there are transition indicators included in that state performance plan. School districts are targeted for technical assistance, training, and support through the Florida Department of Education and their discretionary projects based on their performance on these indicators. This is really something important for you to know.

The transition indicators are:

Indicator one, which is the percent of youth with IEPs graduating from high school with a regular diploma compared to the percent of all youth in the state graduating with a regular diploma. So that's graduation rate.

Indicator two, is the percent of youth with IEPs dropping out of high school compared with the percent of all youth in the state dropping out of high school. Shorthand for that one is dropout rate.

Indicator 13, is the percent of youth age 16 and above with an IEP that includes coordinated, measurable annual IEP goals and transition services that will reasonably enable the student to meet the post-secondary goals. So that's transition IEP with measurable post-secondary goals.

And Indicator 14, is the percent of youth who had IEPs who are no longer in secondary school and who have been competitively employed, enrolled in some type of post-secondary school or both within one year of leaving high school. And that's post-school outcomes. So when you're thinking about these -- when you're talking in your teams, think about these indicators and what are the results for your districts, each district, the school district person should have the information related to this information to these indicators.

If you don't have that information or you'd like to know where to get it, you can go back to the school districts and find that

information. It's also available at the state level.

And then, how will your planning at the conference improve outcomes in all of those areas. I am your content expert for the Florida Department of Education. If you want to ask questions about the indicators, please feel free to let your facilitator know, and I'll be happy to come and visit you and talk about that.

I'm really happy to have the opportunity this morning to introduce to you the two districts that have been working with the Discovery Process that's on your panel here today.

The Discovery Process is an individualized research-based systematic process that begins at the middle school level. It's comprehensive. It includes both formal and informal assessments, and it's collaborative. It focuses on the individual's aptitudes and interests. And at the high school level, career planning includes a transition plan or a graduation plan and career assessment including

portfolios. So they are going to talk to you about their implementation.

We have two districts here today. Martin County will start the session, and Monroe County will finish the session. There will be opportunities for questions at the end of the presentation. We would like for folks that have questions to use the mikes that are in the aisles. One is over here and one is over there so that everyone in the room can hear your questions.

I'd like to introduce the team members to you. To my left beginning with Marty Jacquette, Richard Martin, Alissa Mitchell, Peggy Mannering, Kyra Houck, Willa Tyler and Mike Capps.

Willa, you're starting.

WILLA TYLER: I'm starting.

JOYCE LUBBERS: Okay. Over to you.

Thank you.

WILLA TYLER: All righty.

Good morning. Can you all hear me out there? Oh, I am on. My name is Willa Tyler. I'm the project manager for Project Discover out of

Martin County. Just to give you a snippet of what we're all about, we're working through a grant through the Developmental Disabilities, this morning, before we really get started -- can you tell I'm a little nervous. Dave, my AV buddy over there, is going to go ahead and share a little video clip of one of the students that we're working with. Dave.

SPEAKER: Stall them!

WILLA TYLER: Does anybody know any jokes. This young man is one of our students and he had the opportunity to go before our county commission --

SPEAKER: Good days, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Craig wallace. I'll be graduating in May of 2008.

As an adult in this community I have goals for after graduation. They include many things, like going to college and moving into my own apartment. The most important thing for me to meet these goals will be for me to have a job so I can pay for my rent, electric, water, and food.

A job in this community would not only be a paycheck. It would give me the independence and self-esteem that we all strive for as adults both young and old. Thank you all for giving me your time and attention.

WILLA TYLER: I don't know about you all, but there wasn't a dry eye in the house that afternoon. There was standing room. The county commissioners were just -- it was awesome. I get excited thinking about it.

Anyway, really, what happened that day was Craig, as you can see, he put a face to the need.

Only 25% of students with mental retardation are employed after exiting school. 80% of people with significant disabilities are not working.

These statistics validate the need. We, as professionals, know that once our kids graduate, they are lost. That need grows larger and larger each day. We feel in Martin County that project -- or not project discovery --

discovery in itself, is the answer to minimizing that need.

We're quite lucky down in Martin County. We're a small community, and we're quite unique.

Adult Education Department and Adult Service Provider, Tri-County Tech, which is now referred to as Helping People Succeed, have developed quite a good working rapport over the past 30-plus years. In addition to that, this year -- this is absolutely awesome -- is the fact that we have an adult ed classroom setting, and then we have adult service providers working in the secondary school working with those high school students. It's quite awesome to be a part of all this.

In addition, we have a unique district. All of our teachers have a very forward thinking -- a forward-thinking mode of approaching our kids with disabilities. Their beliefs are such that it's employment for all, not just in the classroom, but they are thinking, yeah, these guys are going to graduate. They are going to be out

there working. They are going to be a part of our lifestyle. And in addition, our county is a forerunner in change. Our administrators want to keep bringing in those new programs and trying out what's out there and making it happen for our kids.

Our pilot site was chosen. One of our newest high schools is Jensen Beach High School. We're working in two classrooms, varying exceptionalism classrooms. Primarily, we chose this particular school because they have an extremely strong belief on employment for all.

The objectives that we have for working in our project were to, obviously, do training. We wanted to get everybody on the same page.

We already have that strong belief, but there are some paraprofessionals, there are people out there that just quite are on the edge of believing that our kids can work. And, of course, technical assistance.

And overall, when we back out of the picture, we're looking at that system, at changing

it and making it happen. Letting those teachers take over and let them slide on in and do the right thing.

In our process itself, we looked at 12 children that we're working with. Six of the kids are in 14- to 18-year-old group and the balance are in the 18- to 22-year-old classroom.

Our training was facilitated back in January by Tammara Geary with Griffin and Hammis. She came down, and our participants were primarily the teachers at our school. We also, in addition, had teachers from some of the other schools, and we had a lot of administration, a lot of staff, and we also had the administration from HPS, our partner, and several of their job coaches also attended. The two-day focused primarily on the philosophy of supported employment in that everyone can get a job.

As you can see, this is one of our slides with all of our administration, and we're lucky enough today to have Mike Capps participate on our panel. Mike is not only one of our

facilitators with one of our students, he's a member of our advisory -- well, actually the chairperson of our advisory committee. Oh, excuse me. And then also our management team.

What is any kind of program without technical assistance? Lisa Friedman-Chavez, where are you? Thank you, Lisa. She's been fabulous. She has helped us through the process and she's a wonderful cheerleader. We thank her.

Let's get started. Today I'm not going to train you on how to do discovery. I'll give you an update on what we know. We're not experts. We're in the learning phase, but we will share with you what we do know.

Where do we start? We start with the kids. This is just a slide of -- not all of our kids, but most of our kids. They are quite awesome. We have some of the older kids and some of the younger kids here.

Discovery is a process. And it's as simple as getting to know that person. Joyce gave you all the technical terms, and it is an in-depth

process, but it's a very simple one. It's a simple concept.

where do you do discovery? You do discovery wherever that student leads you. It's quite awesome when you think about it. You're just kind of being with that student, and you're learning the student. You're getting to know that person.

Some strategies for discovery are interviews. And I can't stress this enough because you need to start with interviewing the family members, and I know Norm talked about that a little bit earlier, how important it is.

Another strategy is observations. watching that individual as they go out and they live their life. It could be going to a synagogue. It could be going to the cafeteria. It could be going wherever.

And my all-time favorite is hanging out. I never realized I would get paid just to hang out, which is pretty awesome in my book. One of the really great things about our project was the

fact that Kyra Houck from HPS came aboard in the very beginning. We wrote her into the grant, and she is the one that really gets to hang out with the students. It's quite awesome to do.

And, of course, meetings. And I can't say enough about meetings, and it's quite a juggle of meetings.

This is a slide on one of our students. And as you can see, he has quite a team built up around him. What I have to say about their team members is such that you need to find people that are advocates for that student. That want to be a part of that student's life and help him facilitate it.

In addition, you want all your team members to believe in employment. Have them all on the same page and believe in that student.

Okay. Just a little bit about the vocational profile. You all know about that, I hope. The vocational profile is a document that takes all the information that you have gathered, and it puts it into a document form. It's quite

simple. It's a nice little, cute little report.

It goes one step further. It's more of a descriptive picture of what that student is. It's like a little vignette. If you're a person like myself who likes to babble and talk a lot, it's very hard for me to kind of trim that down. So it's a learning process for me.

Once you get into the process itself -- just a suggestion, take the profile and identify what you're going to do with that. If you're going to be working with one of the younger kids, take the profile and use it to help enhance what they are already doing in their IEP and to further that along with the younger kids. Peggy is going to talk about that in just a few minutes.

Another thing is to identify the information for career customized job development for your older kids.

And also, the profile will give you information that identifies supports and accommodations that are currently used to be successful throughout.

The next section, as you go down the profile, you come to customized employment plan.

And very briefly, you take the information that you have gathered in the profile and you apply it to the various section: Ideal employment situation, the preferences, contributions, job development.

You take the information that you have, and you look at that and you match up your jobs in your area and the job tasks that are available. And also, this is something that we haven't come across with anybody that we've been with in the process, but is the self-employment section. Again, you take the information that you have and apply it into starting your own business, that person. And just so -- this is wonderful.

I've always wanted to do this. I'm going to give a plug. If you all have seen this out, this is our "B.O.S.S." manual, and it's Self-Employment for Individuals with Disabilities. It's quite incredible. I mean, you know, I did help write it, but anyway, anybody can do this.

It's really neat. It's so user-friendly, and I'm excited. So grab one when you're out in the hall.

This is one of our students, Krystal. I tend to babble, so I'll go a little further or quicker or whatever. She's awesome. She is finishing up. She graduated last year, returned to the classroom for the final year, and primarily she's working on her career experiences every day.

As you can see, her team members vary on the list. She has a lot of people in her life and they all advocate for her. In addition, under the discovery heading, we have family survey, experiences, meetings, home visits, these are just the strategies we had spoken about just a moment ago.

One thing I didn't touch on was historical data. I don't know about you, but as an educator, I know I want to go back and get that case file and look into the records and find out about this new student that's coming my way and know that person. Don't go there, ladies and gentlemen. Let that be for a while.

Take that student, learn the student, do your interviews, do observations, hang out with them, get to know them. Then you go in and you look at that data.

The reason being, it's going to cloud your judgment. You pick up that folder and you're going to already have a preconceived idea. Don't go there. It's not going to help the outcome.

As with Krystal, we finished her profile and customized employment plan. VR got it. They read it. They loved it. The positive things that VR is saying -- it's wonderful. And Krystal went through the entire process of interviewing our service providers in her small community. So we really only had two service providers for supported employment.

She went through the process, asked all the questions. Her support coordinator was right there for her and advocated. Unfortunately, her support, in my opinion, the support plan didn't reflect supported employment until she was in her like last six months of her very final year of

high school. It should have been in there a little sooner.

Anyway, we just found out when we got up here is that Krystal has chosen HPS as her provider and one of our job coaches will be working with her. So, yea!

Again, discovery is just a simple process of getting to know that person. You take the information that you have gathered in the discovery process, and you capture it in your vocational profile. You've got your plan. And from the plan, that builds the foundation from the customized employment plan. Thank you.

(Applause)

PEGGY MANNERING: I want to talk a little bit about the programmatic side. What we discovered about our program as we were going through it.

We discovered as we all know that there are limited people resources, and also time is scarce. So we really need to utilize people and time. We need to utilize them wisely.

And we were really surprised at how booked up our students were. They go to school from 7:00 to 2:30 or 3:00. They have afternoon activities. They have evening activities and weekend. So they really have a full schedule.

We also discovered that the report has to be there or has to be developed, and it also has to be maintained. We were very lucky to have Kyra go into the classroom and develop that rapport with teachers and with the students prior to starting the activities. So she became one of the classroom.

And I think one of the greatest things we discovered is that it's created a new enthusiasm for transition. Last week one of our teachers said I finally have a tangible tool that I can sit down with parents and with students and talk about transition. So right there, that's very worth it. And also, we always discovered that we need more training and we need more information.

Any program wants to have value added to

it, but I think our value added is added to our district, not just to the program. If the program goes away, we still have this value added.

The adult agencies have gained rapport with the schools. Vocational Rehab is in the school now. Support coordinators are coming to school. The teachers are heading rapport with the supported employment specialist. Also, school personnel are recognizing what is needed for that student after they graduate. So there's a lot of communication.

And I think one of the greatest one is the last, the parents gain firsthand knowledge of adult services. It's not a school district or teacher telling the parents you need to do this while they are in school and then the parent trots over here and talks to an adult agency. We're all sitting at the table. We're all talking. We're all trying to figure out avenues. And I think that's been the greatest gain that we've had, that parents are gaining firsthand knowledge.

Also, Willa goes out and she does a lot

of family visits. And I said instead of her interviewing them about the student, she spends an awful a lot of time being interviewed by the parents. They are hungry for information.

As with any program, you want to be able to sustain it. Our management team is Mike Capps, Willa, Kyra and myself. And all through the project, which started last November, we've been getting together and deciding how can we sustain this program? How do we make it better?

And we knew, first of all, we would have to avoid adding discovery as another thing for teachers to do. I don't think we've gotten there yet, but we are trying very hard. And some things we have tried, teachers have to do transition meetings. They have to do IEP meetings. So on some occasions, we've included a discovery meeting within that, and it's worked very well. We haven't done it for all the students.

Limit the number and length of discovery meetings. We've been averaging five meetings per student. And with 12 students between two

teachers, you can see how cumbersome that is. So we do need to limit that.

And seek alternative meeting arrangements. We have some parents who have no transportation or medical issues. We've actually not only had the family visits and home visits, but we've gone in the home to have the actual meeting and brought the agencies with us.

Involve all the players from the onset. When we wrote the grant for the DD council, Mike and Willa and I wrote the grant, and then we sat down with the Director of Exceptional Ed, Executive Director of Student Services, Director of Adult Ed, the transition specialist, teachers, parent, and HPS. And we sat at the table and read through the grant and said, are these things we can do? Are these things we need to do? Are they things we want to do? So from the beginning, we've had input. And then most of those players are also on our advisory committee.

Develop roles and responsibilities was a request from the Director of Exceptional Ed. She

said, "I want my staff to start facilitating meetings and developing profiles." So she asked for roles and responsibilities to be developed.

And community connections. We need that in everything. Having that connection where you make one phone call really helps you sustain a program rather than spending hours trying to make a connection.

And as always, we want to seek additional funding. Sometimes it's for start-ups, sometimes it's for continuations, or sometimes just an enhancement of that program.

One of the things that we're really proud of -- I'm not sure if you are all familiar with the third party cooperative agreements between school boards and vocational rehabilitation. Well, they will pay for a supported employment specialist that is a school board employee. But there's a little glitch.

You have to have some up-front money from the school district that's nonfederal. Well, our school district already had its budget set, so

we were going to not be able to get the position. At a discovery meeting, Mike Capps said HPS will put up the money. We need this position. Our students need the position. So they put up the money, start-up money for a school board position that will be later funded or will be funded through Vocational Rehab. And that's a reason Willa talked about that unique collaboration that we have.

And again, as we add new teachers, new schools, we want to do additional training. That's how we sustain it. Also, we have a lot of peer students that want to learn the training or support coordinators. Anyone can facilitate the meeting, so we want to make sure we train all that are interested.

We were extremely lucky. Last month we had a third-party evaluation by Michael Callahan of Marc Gold and Associates and Ellen Condon from University of Montana Rural Institute. Not only did we get a lot of kudos from them for what we were doing, they also gave us suggestions for

streamlining so that we could sustain our program.

The four main ones they gave us were utilize observations in all aspects of a student's life. Limit prescheduled discovery experiences. We were trying to use -- develop our own experiences for the students, and we were averaging eight to ten experiences per student. And, again, you can see where that becomes very cumbersome. Plus, the students' schedules are very full.

So they suggested that we use observations in the classroom, use observations in their activities, in their leisure, in their community. Now, you still want to have your own prescheduled ones and put maybe some more weight on these new activities. But they said to include all observations across all environments.

The next one we have a little bit of trouble with, limit the size of discovery teams. We know that, but we've solved so many problems at these meetings that we hate to give that up. We just had a meeting Monday that Lisa came up from

Miami for. We've started with this student in February. This was our 12th big meeting, and we still had 11 people at that table on Monday. And that's VR counselors, that's support coordinator, that's a family member from out of county, the student, his companion. So we hate to give that up.

But they did suggest for sustainability, you have to make it workable. So they said to limit the size to approximately three members on a team, three members per student. So the teams can be varied, have different people, a parent could lead the team. A support coordinator, a teacher.

And limit meetings. As I said, we were having approximately eight meetings per student. Have two. One midway through the discovery and one to review the profile once it's been written and to help develop the customized employment plan.

So why do we do discovery and why do we want to sustain it? It's so that we can make things happen for Craig. As Craig said at the

beginning, he wants to have a job. He wants to have his own apartment. Craig is a little bit different from Krystal. He has not graduated yet.

He graduates in May. He wants to work. So second semester, he's going to be working. His profile has already been sent to Vocational Rehab. Of course, Vocational Rehab has been part of the meetings. He's already selected HPS as his supported employment specialist.

But, because he's still in school, the school board has to job coach him first and then in March, HPS has made the commitment without getting the funding yet, they will come in and fade in or fade out, whether it's still job coaching or whether it's follow along. So that's why we were doing discovery so we can add more students and help more students be in the employment field.

And here are our Web sites. Thank you very much. (Applause)

MARTY JACQUETTE: Hi. I'm from Monroe County. We had two teams, one in the Lower Keys,

one in the Upper Keys. We are spread out. I was lucky to be a member on both teams.

We did not have a grant, so that was an issue as far as some of the experiences and things that we wanted to do. In our Lower Keys team, it didn't seem to be an issue but it was an issue in our Upper Key. I think that for us we might try to steal a couple of their ideas and maybe get out there and try to find a grant that may be -- we could have some financial support for our teams.

I think we just kind of wrote down what some of the benefits were and what some of the challenges were. I think overall, we found out interest and skills, all kinds of things about both of the individuals that we worked with.

Both of the students that we had do discovery are both graduating this year. I think definitely, I think if you start at an earlier age, I think that would be one thing I would do, because -- and I think it's just having a beginning and an end, because we can just -- I mean, every single thing we did led to ten other

things that -- I mean, it could go on forever.

I think it should go on forever because everything is going to keep going, and you may change your interests. One of the things that we really discovered for one student, a lot of things that had not been successful are things that he didn't like in the past when we looked at those things again, you know, two years later, his mom said, no, he doesn't like it. Doesn't like to do this.

He had really changed. He did like these things. So I think -- not only changing our views, but the parent's view of things that might be capacities for that student. I like the idea of having the action plan. I know we did a lot of things, too, when we wrote down every step that we were going to do. And it was time-consuming, but I don't know, for me, when you write things down, you assign a person that's responsible, it happens. Sometimes when you don't, it just doesn't happen. So I think writing things down and actually having that action plan really works

really well for us.

Definitely having lots of different agencies and community people because I think ten heads are better than one. I think everybody had different ideas. Everybody knew somebody, and it really made it easy. Once we came up with an idea, somebody was like, well, I know this person, or I can go do this. It really just happened a different -- not having all school people. It was nice having a variety of people on our team.

It was -- just a couple of examples. One of our students who had been using, like, a communication book, pretty much for the last five years, and it worked, but it really didn't work. And it kept coming back. Every time we met, something kept coming back about communication.

And all of a sudden, this person who really had never really used very many words all of a sudden everybody is saying, well, now he's saying things. He's using words. He's trying to communicate, and it finally kind of dawned on us with this student, I think this year at age 21, he

just realized what communication means. I mean, it was just like -- because everybody kept noticing these things. And he would do things like -- he never smiled because all of a sudden when you sit down with him, he would just give appropriate smiles and things were happening. Of course, he no longer was getting speech therapy, but we were able to contact, get an evaluation.

we found somebody on the Internet that came down to do a free evaluation, and we've actually gotten a new device. We started using the Go Talk 9+ and that was working but not great. So now we have a new device we just got last week that we think will be something to augment his communication. It kind of opened that whole communication thing that I think would have probably gone untapped. I think he would have still in ten years been using that little book that wasn't working that well.

So I think just, you know, the different things that come up, you know, definitely open up new doors for people.

Again, like, challenges. We're actually just now completing our vocational profiling. It did take a long time, because we started probably last March, and we're just now getting to the profile. I think next time we're going to probably start the profile right off, at least the basic information and work on the profile as we go.

So it's not like such a large task at the end. And then trying -- if there's something we're missing gaps, then we know from the profile that we maybe need to do some more discovery in that area.

For us, the coordination of meetings was a problem because we are spread out in the Keys. We did do some phone conferences, and I think we'll probably maybe try to do more of those.

And try to limit some of the meetings, because we did have a lot of meetings, too, just for our two kids. I don't know if we did 12, but we probably met at least, I would say, maybe six or seven times already on each student. So it was

a lot of meetings, and most of them were like about two and three hours.

Again, looking for that financial support for -- if we want to go out and do some things, and I think putting aside preconceived ideas and making sure if there is somebody on your team, I mean, has that -- doesn't really feel that that student can work or do something, then that's not the person you want to be sending out on the experiences, because they've already made up their mind that they can't do this.

And so I think making sure that if you have that person on your team and, unfortunately, sometimes a lot of teachers have had these kids for ten years or -- you know, in a small district, you might have that child for a long time. I think sometimes it's hard to put aside some of those things. So you want to make sure those people are limited, you know, in the types and the experiences, and then get other views and ideas.

Again, not ruling out things that have been unsuccessful in the past, like for one of our

students, he loves to eat -- I mean, he likes cooking. That's probably been the only TV show he's ever watched in his entire life. But every time he gets around food, that's all he thinks about is eating. We were kind of -- the parent and the teacher had been ruling out jobs in the food industry because they are afraid he would just eat all the time.

We did do some things and we went out and started -- and I think because of this new understanding of communication and the difference between working and, you know, leisure time, we just got him a job at McDonald's. And he's doing great. And he's not trying to eat all the time he's at McDonald's. So I think, you know, we went back and looked at some of those things. So I think, you know, it's just opened up my eyes. I learned to ride the public transportation myself. I never had done that. So I actually discovered something about myself.

So, again, I think it's just, you know, just having different ideas, being open to

different ideas and just kind of letting the student take you where they want to go.

I also wanted to thank Lisa. She has, like anytime we needed anything, called her, e-mailed, she's been right there. And I think that has probably made us the most successful, because we've had that support. And hopefully we'll be able to continue. We're hoping maybe next year we'll be a little more on our own, but we'll still be able to have that support when we need that. Do you guys want to add anything?

Well, our future plans will be -- I already had requests for more students. I think what hopefully we might try to see about getting some kind of financial support just for -- pretty much the people that have been involved and going out have not asked for money to be paid. I think most everybody has really kind of enjoyed being able to do some of those experiences. But just for money for when if you want to go and explore something at a restaurant or a movie or whatever, just so we had a little bit of financial money for

the actual outings, I think, would be nice.

But I think starting at an earlier age and being able to come back and revisit it would probably be where we would go. Because right now, for the students that we're doing, I almost feel rushed, you know, because I feel like we're on a time line. And I think starting a little bit earlier that we might have been able to do some things, try some things and then come back and revisit it. I think we'll look at looking at a little earlier age. And kind of going with, you know, when we see a student that has that need which, you know, we do have a lot of kids.

RICHARD MARTIN: You asked about the future plan.

Right now, we're designing the process, the steps to go through those kind of things, and as she said, starting at an early age.

If we can start the discovery out in the community-type things, with the community-based instruction, around age 14 and 15. By the time they get up to 18 or 19, you have a lot of the

discovery done. And the student actually has contributed to their likes and dislikes and things of that nature. It's going to change as it goes.

But that would be the future of it is to get the process started throughout the schools, throughout all the schools for all the kids at earlier ages. Therefore you're not cramped at the end and it's not as time-consuming on each teacher because now you've got certain blocks set in to experience this, experience that, do this, do that, and you're taking notes as you're going all the way through.

And also you're giving the student something. He has ownership of or she has ownership of, all the way up through here because it's their profile.

One other thing that I want to point out, the way this process is done. It gets you out of the school. You have to be involved in the community. When you go do this outing -- you're calling up Home Depot and say I'm bringing a student over to have an experience. You're

calling up the Hilton hotel, for instance, or the laundromat, or wherever you're going. So it's a give and take. The students learning about them, they are learning about the student.

we're learning about that particular job and we're getting all the players involved. Again, when we have Vocational Rehab, we've got the South Florida workforce, we've got the Med-waiver program which I'm from.

The other part of that is to get the community involved. And you're getting them involved at an earlier age. Those two things. Let them know about the student capability, but it gives us insight to where the jobs are.

what do these industries need out here? what do we need to develop in our community for our students so that they can fit in the community? In Monroe County, we're a hospitality. we have hotels, restaurants, things like that. So those kinds of jobs are available. That doesn't mean that we're going to try to fit everybody into those jobs. But it's a give and take.

We need to figure out what the community needs so that we're experiencing those things. That's the only thing I need to give.

SPEAKER: I have a couple of questions. I didn't hear the question that you were answering. So if we can ask the question before that you just answered.

Two things, one that I want you to talk about, one is hanging out with intent and the observations and not to have a preconceived notion of where they are going.

The second question is separate, also. I see that you have people, individuals that have some cognitive challenges. But are you looking at anybody with significant cognitive challenges for competitive employment or micro-enterprise of self-employment?

MARTY JACQUETTE: Our same student that is working right now at McDonald's, he does have a significant cognitive disability, and he really likes recycling. That is one thing he loves. It took him around three years to learn to do can

crushing, but he really, really likes it. So we've been trying to incorporate how we could get that into some kind of self-employment with the recycling. Through the discovery, we actually made a couple of contacts, and he also has attended a county -- they have a new thing, green and clean or something. And he has also attended one of the city commission meetings and has been getting involved in some of their Saturday cleanups and been attending their meetings. And so now all these different agencies that attend these meetings are starting to contact him about setting up some recycling things in the city. So we're hoping that that's going to be -- we have just applied to VR for the self-employment. So we're hoping to see if we can develop that into some kind of self-employment.

And I'll give an example, too, on the H.O.W.I. I did go out on one H.O.W.I. with a student that we went to the -- just an example of what we did.

We went to the grocery store. And he

had been going for years to the grocery store with a list of what he wanted to purchase. So when we went on our experience, he did not have a list. I didn't give him a list. And I clearly just wanted to see what he actually could do. So it was really -- it was really kind of exciting. So, you know, we got to the grocery store. And I really kind of took the backseat. Didn't say a word.

He got the cart. And he started around the -- he went the outer loop of the grocery store. He didn't pick up anything. Didn't, you know -- and so I just kind of watched. We went the outer loop again of the grocery store. It's like he might have had eyes on the side of his head because I'm thinking, he's going to hit that old lady with the cart. But I didn't want to say -- but he always maneuvered around. It's like mothering, and it was everything I could do not to say, watch it, watch it, watch it.

But anyway, so we did a loop about three times, and then all of a sudden, he went down an aisle. And I thought he would get a pizza, which

he did, because that's his favorite food, pizza and cheese. But he didn't get the cheese, but he got the pizza and he went to check out, and everything was going great. He got his money out. I'm thinking, geesh, I was like -- so he got his money paid and everything was going smoothly.

Right when he got his change back, you know how they have all the candy and all the stuff -- he sees the candy bar and he wants to make another purchase. And the lady is looking at me like, aren't you going to help this guy. So he's got change in one hand and he decides to purchase, so he grabs that. He knows to put it up there. But then what happened was then he has two hands of change.

And that became obvious -- we had to look at his money situation and redo how, because he didn't know -- that was the only thing. He knew to say -- do the purchasing, knew to say thank you, knew to get his money back.

But once he had the two hands of change, he didn't know what to do with the money and then

he still had to get the bag out of the cart. And I really tried to stay back and really watched to see and try not -- because I was almost crying by this point.

But the lady behind the counter helped him. She said, honey, don't -- but then he started laying the money in the cart, because he knew he had to get the bag out. And the lady behind the thing helped. She said, no, you have to put all the money back in your wallet. So she prompted him right away.

Those natural supports are there. It really worked out. But it was really great just to really not -- to sit back and really watch the whole thing, because I think we're so quick to jump in there and get him going. That's kind of the few that I went out, I tried to really take the backseat and see exactly what was going to happen. So that was kind of the example of a H.O.W.I. for me.

MIKE CAPPS: We had a young lady that we're working with -- with some pretty severe

challenges. Noncommunicative, had a lot of, like we call acting out behavior, but actually I think that was more communication mechanism than anything else. But a lot of issues, and she had been in the school system her whole life.

There were some issues with the family in relation to what was going to happen to her after she graduated and things like this, and decisions were made that probably should have been made two or three years ago, were being made six months or four months before she was supposed to graduate from high school. So that presented its own set of challenges.

But, in fact, we do have -- we do have a plan for her that is going to Voc Rehab. Which, quite honestly, we thought for a long time we'd never get to that point. But it is going to Voc Rehab. And one other thing I would like to say about this whole discovery process, if I might.

It's important to understand that, you know, there are some general concepts about discovery that you really need to attend to.

But it's also extremely important that you don't get caught up in the process. We as a field always look for magic bullets to fix things and get things done real quick. And the reality is, what we do is not a quick thing. There are no quick fixes here.

Particularly with discovery, you need to understand that the outcome that you're looking for is an employment plan for that person so they will be able to do something when they are out of school. That's the whole purpose of the H.O.W.I.S. That's the whole purpose of everything we do in this process, whether we start it when they are 14 or whether we start it when they are 22.

It's really important to keep that in mind. That's one of the reasons why we had 12 meetings for one person. We didn't know when the heck to stop. We were getting all this good information. We were getting a lot of experience with this person we hadn't had before. And that's really great, but as they say where I come from,

sometimes it's time to either fish or cut bait.

So really knowing -- and, you know, Mike indicated to us that we should be able to get a H.O.W.I. done in, what did he say? 26 hours, average time is 26 hours from start to finish.

Now, I will tell you this, we have not at this point in time got close to the 26 hours. We're working on that. That was one of the real values I think in having them come down and do a QA in our particular program. It kind of made us focus on what was important.

And, quite honestly, what we're looking at here from my perspective is more system change than anything else. The reason being that, you know, school systems and I can say this because I really don't work in one -- school systems tend to be very process oriented. When you do discovery, you really need to be very flexible.

In classrooms, there's not a lot of flexibility there. I mean, teachers are burdened with so much stuff that they have to get done in a relatively short period of time. The

documentation, the transition planning, all that kind of stuff has to be done. So the real key to making this effective is how do you combine that or how do you find those parts of stuff that they are mandated to do that can be done by discovery.

And you come out with an employment plan in that junior or senior year that goes directly to Vocational Rehabilitation and Voc Rehab doesn't have to think. All they have to do is say, hey, I have an employment plan here, certified for service. They are eligible, let's get him going. So you're really overcoming a lot of those barriers that historically have stopped people from being employed. And I apologize for rambling on.

Yes, ma'am, you had a question. I'm sorry to make you wait for so long.

SPEAKER: No, that's okay. My question, I guess, goes to part of what you just said about outcomes and for part of this process, your outcome goal is to be the plan itself. As a parent, my -- my outcome is for my young adult to

have the job and to live independently. So I understand both of your districts are relatively new into this process, so you probably don't have outcome results for any of your students yet. I assume in terms of having them actually employed or living on their own, are there national outcomes that we could reference in terms of the discovery process? Before I start beating up my district and saying, we need to do this, I don't feel like I've got enough evidence today to say that -- let's switch to how we're doing things.

MIKE CAPPS: I think there's -- I'm sorry. I think if you talk to Michael Callahan, and we can give you the contact information, he can give you an awful a lot of documentation. Who else? Go on the web. Here, talk.

WILLA TYLER: Check out Michael Callahan, MARC Gold Associates on the web and also, Ellen Condon at the Rural Institute. There's a tremendous amount of information. In addition, I believe there's some stuff going on out in California, and I believe New York and

Tennessee -- and outcomes are there. They have the data. You're right, we're just getting started and we're on the verge of getting people employed.

what's really great, well, I'll let Kyra speak to this, because I'm not a job coach.

KYRA HOUCK: well, I just wanted to comment that especially going into the school system early on into the classrooms and to be -- can you hear me -- and to be able to actually have this, you know, experience for these kids to be able to go out in the community and not just be in such a setting and in the school the whole time is a wonderful thing.

Because they are able to see things that they haven't really experienced before, and with the teachers, allowing that to happen, which they are at Martin County, I can e-mail them, call them up and say, I have something set up for vocational experience, can we do it on this day? And they say, fine, go. So I think that has a lot to say.

Because it seems like in the past, we

would do -- we would attend some of the IEP meetings, but by the time that the kids were graduating and we got the referral from the adult providers, it's like we had to start this process from the very beginning. It's the same thing. That's what discovery is doing. But if you do it early on you're going to have all that information. I think we'll be able to place these kids a lot faster.

MIKE CAPPS: And our goal, to be honest with you, is to have folks employed when they come out of school. They have a job. We have one young man -- we have two folks right now that we're working with that, all things being equal, they will be employed long before the day they graduate.

So when they go into post-graduate services, they are going in Follow Along or going into a support system, and we can really deal with those things like supported living and things like that. Supported living is not easy when you've got a job. That's kind of our goal through this

whole process. I think that answered your question.

MARTY JACQUETTE: And I wanted to add making sure they are employed in a job of their choice. Because we can find jobs, but making sure -- and I think that's the been the whole thing for us is to really -- especially for some students that do have limited communication skills, it's not always easy to know, you know, they are not able to always tell you what they really want to do. For those students, it's a really good process to really find out what their interests are.

MIKE CAPPS: Yes, ma'am.

SPEAKER: Do either of your counties have community-based instruction programs?

MIKE CAPPS: Yes.

SPEAKER: So this is in addition to the CDL?

WILLA TYLER: It's not just an addition, it enhances the career experiences. Absolutely. And like Kyra was saying, she has to call the

school and work around their schedule, because everybody is out doing their thing and not impede on their time out at their job sites, but absolutely enhances that.

MIKE CAPPS: One quick thing on that, if I might add. When I start talking, I have a hard time stopping. For all of you who know me, I've always had a problem with in-school work experience. Because the tendency is, it's the same jobs and it's do it over and over again. And you run people through it, God knows, how many times. I will say that Martin County does -- has always had a pretty good work experience program, even though I have some personal bias against it.

But what discovery will do is it allows you to take some of the experiences, not all of them, obviously, you do not want to rely on work experience to determine what a person is going to do for the rest of their lives or their first real job, but it allows you to enhance that possibility.

And with Kyra as a job coach who has

been an employee and a job coach for HPS for ten years -- 11 years, and, quite honestly, one of our most productive job coaches over the years with some of our most difficult or most challenged individuals that we work with. Her ability to go into that classroom and work with folks, the work experience people and the teachers giving them some insight about what happens outside those four walls has been invaluable, I think.

Yes, ma'am.

SPEAKER: I just have a quick question. In the discovery process, when you're working with students, do you ever discover that they've been on the wrong track and they should possibly be working toward a standard high school diploma and looking at a community college? Have you ever discovered anybody that would fit that?

WILLA TYLER: No, we haven't come across anybody like that in our county.

MIKE CAPPS: But keep in mind, we have only been -- this is what, nine months, I guess we've been under contract. I would tell you that

I think in the future, assuming there's some sustainability, we will definitely find those folks, which would be another value. Yes, ma'am.

SPEAKER: I just wanted to know as part of the discovery process, in the strategic plan that we have, there is a Section 2-A on career assessments to help identify students school and post-school preferences and interest. And it talks about portfolios. And it does say that every exiting eighth grade student has completed a career portfolio, which includes a variety of career assessments and career exploration activities.

This discovery process that you're talking about, is this -- does this line up with this portfolio item in the strategic plan? Or do you create a portfolio for your students so that in case the jobs that they've been through, the one they end up with might not be the one that they eventually end up with that they have documentation, and is it tied in with the schools in terms of portfolios?

PEGGY MANNERING: I'm in adult education, so I don't really know a lot about the eighth grade.

we have been doing a written profile, but we're starting to do the portfolio where you have pictures of the student doing the activity. We were even saying it could be almost in a PowerPoint presentation type where you have the verbiage and the picture. And so we were starting to do that. Our teachers, in fact, are the ones who really asked -- we got a request for a camera. Could they start taking the pictures when they see students when they are working or doing a community activity? So we are going that route, and will be added to --

SPEAKER: Okay. I think that in our district, one of the things we talk about is authentic assessments and assessments that will work in a variety of environments. Especially you don't want an assessment that when you get to Voc Rehab -- oh, we can't use that assessment, it doesn't follow our pattern. And we're trying to

look at how we can tie in assessments that are required and are in the strategic plan to, you know, support the student in every environment. So it's in the strategic plan, and it's the reason I was asking.

WILLA TYLER: I think it's a good question. If you go to Ellen Condon's site at the Rural Institute, she talks more in depth about the profile.

And one of the things is that visual resumé or portfolio or whatever, but that was not one of the components of our grant. Of course, we didn't go there. But now we're looking at it and, wow, isn't that awesome, isn't that incredible.

And as when we drove up here, we were talking about -- what you do with younger kids. Because it really needs to be with younger kids. And we even talked about doing a PowerPoint. And I thought how incredible that would be to sit at an IEP and have this PowerPoint come up of this student doing these different tasks and it lists the tasks that they've done throughout the year.

I just thought that was incredible. There are different things to do, but check out that site.

NILA BENITO: One comment on Marjorie's question regarding VR, I don't know if this was brought up already, but VR does accept discovery, and they -- was that brought up?

And they actually are coming up with a rate right now. They are doing a rate study, and they want more community rehab providers to be trained about how to do discovery and come out with customized employment plans and be able to pay them. Donni, am I saying it correctly?

And actually, there are some already. It will be statewide. It will be available through VR statewide. This is an approved process and it is completely in line with what our strategic plan is focusing on. Might just not be the eighth grade thing.

SPEAKER: The younger the better, I say.

MIKE CAPPS: Thank you, Nila, for bringing that up. I did want to mention, too, as I said before, that's one of the real values.

Because, basically, what you have when you finish this whole process and you get to that final outcome, you have an employment plan that is extremely viable and reduces -- it should, in fact, reduce the amount of time it takes to find employment for somebody. And that's the kind of stuff that Voc Rehab really likes. Yes, ma'am.

SPEAKER: My question is whether the discovery process assists students to maintain their social network when they leave school and go into employment. As an employment -- supported employment provider, we find that when students leave school, that's it. They kind of lose, you know, connection with their friends and stuff. So all they have is the job.

WILLA TYLER: I'll take that one. It's really kind of cool. I've been going into the homes and meeting all the various families and whatnot. And that question actually has come up with two different parents.

what's going to happen with my son's social life and her daughter's social life.

Anyway, basically down in Martin County, I tell you what, when I was in high school, you know, you had your high school life. These kids are so busy and so involved and there's such a network between these families, it's amazing. And I know that this is just this capsule down in this one particular school.

That's something as a service provider that has always happened with supported employment, is these guys get a job and they do their thing and they have their life. I think it's an extremely important question.

Does anybody have the answer for the social buildup?

RICHARD MARTIN: One thing, when we go through discovery, we don't try to disenfranchise them from any friendships or any social structures that they have. We try to build on that particular thing. Just like any student who graduates from high school, may go off to this college or that college, things are going to change.

They still have their set of friends at home, but they'll develop some new friendships, some new organizations. And so we're trying to build on the socialization struggles that they have, but also introduce them to new socialization circles. Add in the business community to try to get him to develop those social things in this area, this area and that area.

So, yes, they would still have their social circle from the school, assuming they choose to have that, but we're going to try to develop other social circles, where they will be working, people there to help them or get along with, those kind of things to broaden their horizon just like any other student.

SPEAKER: Okay. Adding to the social inclusion and all that, the answer is really simple, it's inclusive. If you are in the -- your natural environment and your neighborhood, my son attended Central School and he also attended a home school after that.

The difference when we create natural

supports into the proper and we don't segregate them, those supports are incredible because even when they go into the community, to the restaurant or to a shopping center, they would find support in all the kids and always they will come to them.

So basically the answer has been in front of us all the time is end segregation, inclusive environments, and with proper supports, the other things will come after that. So that will be one -- is the answer. I don't think there's any other things, end the segregation, and that will create the natural supports.

WILLA TYLER: One of the questions you had mentioned before was about self-employment and we kind of went over it. Mike was talking about the young lady we had worked with early on. She finished -- got through the profile and customized employment plan. And the outcome was self-employment and a delivery business. And we did what we were told to do.

we finished the plan, and we gave it to the family. We gave it to VR, and there were a

lot of other variables in the situation she was moving out into a group home, and there were other family dynamics going on. And it kind of ended there, unfortunately. The self-employment aspect. As far as her getting accustomed to her new environment, she's thriving, she's having a great time. She has a wonderful social life in that regards.

The self-employment stuff is kind of on the back burner, and I don't know, as a team, since she graduated, do we go back and touch base with the family and ask? Do we do that, mike?

MIKE CAPPS: Well, yeah, I think part of the follow-up process, we're going to have to go back and see where they want to go. I mean, there's a plan in place. What are the variables? Have they changed? Do they want to move forward with what we have? Or do they want something else? So we'll definitely pursue that with them.

MARTY JACQUETTE: Can I say one other thing on that same topic? I think what I found as a concern of parents is having those relationships

with people their own age. I mean, I think that is a problem, and I don't know -- I mean, because especially people that have like companions or people that assist them in their job, usually those people aren't the same age as the person. And, you know, they are older. And I think that's a main -- really a concern for parents. And I don't know how to solve all of that. But I think that's something that really needs to be looked at and addressed.

MIKE CAPPS: The young lady over here.

SPEAKER: Yes. I'm at Leon County, and I'm trying to get all my friends together and go places with my friends, and I basically call my friends, get them together, try and figure out where we want to go and do everything by myself.

And my friends are trying to help me with that, and I'm trying to be my own self-advocate and trying to do everything myself.

SPEAKER: Excellent.

SPEAKER: Very good. (Applause)

MIKE CAPPS: Lisa.

SPEAKER: Hi. I just also wanted to add about the social aspect of discovery and why I think it's really incredible as far as enhancing social experiences. And I think that everyone up there has experienced the richness out of the discovery process. And it's different than any other assessment that I've ever seen.

It really is an alternative kind of assessment. And as you're learning what that individual's interests are and the cool thing is that you get to go, as Mike was saying, outside of the school. Most teachers don't have that opportunity.

And what I've heard from the discovery teams is that the teachers are delighted to get this information because it's expanding what they know about that particular student. And the interests that they are discovering through this process is really helping them.

If someone had an interest in beads and they never knew about it, hey, maybe a Michaels or an art store has a beading group once a month.

Hey, that would be an awesome place for folks to really be expanding their social network. It could be even with video games. Some people might have these -- I'm not really into it, but a lot of people are, and there are video game groups.

So you're starting to have a connection with folks that share your interests. And out of those interests, you can also find possible employment leads there, but maybe there won't be an employment lead, but what a cool social group to be a part of. And that will also be with them once they graduate from high school, too.

I mean, I can't say enough good things about the whole discovery process, and employment is one of the biggest outcomes. But there are so many other outcomes that come out of it besides employment. It's like an added benefit to it. I just wanted to add that.

MIKE CAPPS: Thank you, Lisa.

SPEAKER: Hi, Mike. I'm Susan Priest, and I have two sons with different kinds of disabilities. And what I had found that worked

for them while they were in high school and even before that were community organizations -- and I'll give you some examples -- but also electives that they have in school because it helps, one, to help broaden them, whether it be a driver's ed class or whether it be art or photography. But it can also be things like the Key Club, Siroptimus, that kind of thing, Boy Scouts.

There are lots of things we can consider a little bit stronger. And a good example, our son, who has muscular dystrophy, and actually is improving at this time, was in the Key Club and also Boy Scouts, and both boys made life.

But because he was in the Key Club and he's now older -- he's 36 -- and because of those involvements, he actually is still involved with two girls from the Key Club. One is now married. She now has a baby, and they still are in constant contact. So building up those relationships are really key. But you have to focus not just on the disabled population, but also on the norm. The normal activities, the community activities that

are out there.

In Palm Beach County, when I was there, we just moved to a different area, but they had a great Palm Beach County Parks and Recreation Program. Some for the disabled and some regular. It opens up a greater horizon for the individual if we can look a little bit more at that.

And also, I think we need to focus on the fact that because of FCAT and everything they are doing on testing, what other time can we push some of those electives in, because it is a critical issue for them to be opening up other awarenesses, maybe even other occupations. So it is something we still always have to be looking at. Thank you.

MIKE CAPPS: Thank you, Susan. Lewis, did you have a question?

LEWIS PERSONS: Yeah, I have a comment I would like to make. The center on self-employment, which we have received that referral for Dan's Cans from his VR counselor down in Marathon.

And part of the modules in training do incorporate discovery as a key piece of getting to know that person and understanding what's important to them and where their passion lies and how that might translate into not only a wage job, but perhaps self-employment.

Under the METTA Project, the micro-enterprise project funded through the DD Council there, that initiative also looked at discovery as a key component of getting to know that young entrepreneur, that entrepreneur who is choosing to go the route of self-employment or small business ownership. So there's a lot of discovery.

I know the project in Leon County at Lively Tech has led the -- the discovery process there has led to wage jobs for young people who transitioned out of school are actually waiting to receive some type of service. It's happening here in Florida. It's an integral part of the activities that we have, the initiatives that we have at the Florida Center for Inclusive

Communities. So we do have data here in the State of Florida that can support that as viable outcomes for customers seeking self-employment and wage jobs as their outcome from school.

MIKE CAPPS: Thank you, Lewis. I think it's time to go to lunch. Any other questions?

WILLA TYLER: In February I'll be doing a teleconference with Ellen Condon. If you send me -- shoot me an e-mail, I can give you that information as I get it. Thank you.

MIKE CAPPS: Thank you very much.

(Applause)

[Lunch Recess]

*** "YOUTH LEADERSHIP" ***

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2007

1:45 P.M.

JOYCE LUBBERS: Good afternoon, everybody. Good afternoon, everybody. There are a few more teams that will be making their way downstairs and here to the general session, but we'll go ahead and get started. Yea!

Good afternoon. I hope everybody had a great first team planning session. Yeah? Maybe? All right. Super. You are all still talking about it. welcome.

welcome to the Youth Leadership Section of today's agenda. I am Guenevere Crum, Vice-President of the Grants Program at The Able Trust. And I wanted to take a few minutes to tell you about some youth programs that The Able Trust does. One of the most exciting things that is coming up is our Ninth Annual Youth Leadership Forum. (Applause)

Please keep these dates handy, July 24

through July 27th, 2008, in Tallahassee. We are now accepting applications for 55 delegates to participate. Rising juniors and seniors with disabilities should apply. It is free. All travel to get there is paid. Delegates will learn about leadership, advocacy, community service, voting, career fields, and they'll have a bit of fun with a talent show and a dance, and Drew Andrews is right in the middle of it. He's our conga leader.

Imagining coming to Florida's capital and maybe not knowing anyone and leaving with 54 new best friends. The friendships made at YLF are long and enduring, and you'll find your students text messaging and "Myspacing" with their new friends all the time. This program is paid for by The Able Trust in collaboration with great partners, like the Florida DD Council, the Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program, Department of Education, Wachovia Bank, Premier Bank, and Peoples First Bank. We could not do it without their help.

How do you apply? Yea! Please find the applications. They are on The Able Trust Web site, www.abletrust.org, and click on the youth leadership applications. You can also look on there at the previous eight years' highlights and photographs. So this will whet your appetite for applications. The deadline to send in these applications is December 7th. December 7th. Don't forget it. If you have any questions about how to apply or about the program at all, please, there's a lot of information on the Web site, but you can also call the office, 888-838-2253 and talk with Alana Hill. She is our Events Coordinator, and she works with us very closely.

While you're on our Web site, you can also look at other events and programs of The Able Trust, including Disability Mentoring Day. This is a fantastic way of connecting with businesses and students and mentees/mentors in your area. We just had that event, and you can plan for it next October, and it takes pretty much a whole year of planning. So you can get yourself connected right

now to next year's Disability Mentoring Day events. There's also the High School High-tech Program. That's also another link on our web site. So we're looking forward to everyone applying for the Youth Leadership Forum. Don't forget, deadlines are due December 7th.

Also, we would like to welcome today the Florida Youth Council. They are here. Yea!

(Applause)

Carly and Matt and J.T. are towards the back, and you can find out more -- Matt is up here -- you can find out more about how to apply to become a youth council member by catching up with them and clicking on the web site, www.familycafe.net.

But most importantly this afternoon, I would like to introduce our speaker, Anne Sommers, who is a Policy Counsel for the American Association of People with Disabilities in our nation's capital, Washington, D.C. She's a wonderful speaker on disability advocacy and disability rights and will share with us today her

thoughts and expertise on youth leadership.

Please join me in welcoming Anne Sommers.

(Applause)

ANNE SOMMERS: Good afternoon, everyone.

Thanks so much for coming back from lunch. I'll

try to keep you awake through your food coma.

(Laughter) It's always a challenge to be right after lunch. Everyone gets kind of sleepy. And those of you who had the turkey sandwich in particular are in for a treat.

As I was introduced briefly, my name is Anne Sommers. I'm policy counsel for the American Association of People with Disabilities which is the country's largest cross-disability membership organization or as we're coming to find out in Europe they call "pan disability."

We have program areas in youth development, mentoring, get out and vote and a variety of advocacy topics on the federal level. We also monitor state issues and in particular, have been watching carefully what Florida is doing around transitions. And we commend a lot of the

actions that are happening here in this sunshine state.

Just as a way of sort of introducing myself and how I came to AAPD and sort of outing myself as a woman with a disability, I'll tell you that although I am now gainfully full-time employed at AAPD as an attorney, I started -- before I worked for Andy Imperato, who is our president and CEO, before I started on full-time, I worked on a contract basis because there wasn't a space for me. But I really liked the organization.

And I worked with them on doing a disability rights project for the National ACLU's office. But before I worked on contract, which, thankfully involved some money, I was an unpaid intern in the office. And I worked there for a summer and then six months following while they were looking for money to bring me on a contract basis and eventually a full-time position was available.

So I'm sort of an example of

transitioning from one stage into the next into the next. I identified Andy Imparato as someone I wanted to learn from and grow from professionally, and I did everything I could and aligned myself with people who I knew could get me in touch with him and flattery goes a long way. So once I told him how great he was and that I'd work for free, it was shocking how quickly I had an internship in the office. That's my experience with how I came to work at AAPD. In another lifetime prior to additional education, I worked for the health care industry, which is very ironic, as you'll see as I continue to talk today.

One of the things that I'd like to do as I talk a little bit this afternoon is reveal a lot of nicknames that people have given me over the course of my life. They'll tell you a lot about myself and they'll tell you a lot about transitions.

So the first one that I'll tell you is "robo hips." Robo hips is a name that a bunch of children I tutored for in Chester, Pennsylvania,

gave me. And the reason they called me robo hips is because I just started walking independently seven years ago.

I was actually born a square peg for round holes. I arrived on the scene a square peg for round holes without any hips whatsoever. So my legs were turned backwards. My knees were on the other side and my feet shot out this way. So I was ready to go, backwards.

So I got the name "robo hips" because over the course of my childhood and into my early adulthood, I went through a series of surgeries, and surgical interventions to create hip sockets for myself. It was experimental at the time. It worked out pretty good. I have a nice solid waddle now, which I'm comfortable with. And I started walking, like I said, on my own seven years ago. But I have largely titanium-based back legs, hips and knees and can do crazy things with magnets around a lot of my major joints, which is how I got the name "robo hips" from the kids that I tutor.

I also love to surround myself with people with disabilities because I think that we're just a bunch of people who have a lot better senses of humor than our nondisabled peers. And I love the diversity that's in our community.

My fiancé, Ian McIntosh, is a Canadian with an acquired disability. He was in a car accident five years ago after being a professional soccer player, went out the front of a car windshield and landed on his head. So he's been dealing with his journey with disability for the last five years. And to answer any of the questions that some of you may be having already, I met him after he became disabled. Absolutely no impediment or turnoff to me.

My sister, Katherine, is 13 years younger than I am, and I'm not going to give you her age because then you'll be able to do mine. She is 13 years younger than I am and just recently -- she's a junior in high school, so I'm kind of giving it away -- and just recently was diagnosed with ankylospondylitis and rheumatoid

arthritis of a very aggressive nature. In the last three months since her diagnosis, she's already gone through three surgeries and is expecting a number of more. Just this year was her first year as identifying herself as a student with a disability in the public school system where she lives in Richmond, Virginia, with my parents.

And the other person in my family who is brand-new, three weeks old, is little Talon O'Donnell. She is my second cousin, and she was born with a collapsed lung, a hole in her esophagus -- and a girl after my own heart, no hips. Little Talon and I will become very good friends, I've decided, over the course of her life, and I have lots of advice for her.

What I hope to do in the next 45 minutes or so is kind of pattern my talk and my remarks based on tips and advice that I'm giving right now to my sister, have been giving to my fiancé, and will give to my second cousin, Talon. So these are four tips. They are basically life skills

that I've learned since growing up with a disability. And they are not just related to job or school. They are really -- they are really more general than that, but you'll see the applications to school and to work as we go forward.

Tip number one, it sounds real basic. I love all you guys, you have your pens out, I love it. Make yourself known. Make yourself known. You probably think I'm only talking to the students here, but I'm really not. But let's start with students. How many students do we have here today? I know there are a few of you. Oh, more than I thought. Great.

Well, I bet a bunch of you, not just the students, watch Law and Order, right, cop shows. Come on, you guys do. Out yourselves. Nod your heads. You know the stereotypical plot line of a lot of these shows is you've got somebody with a gun to somebody's head and they are crying and they are threatening to kill this person or their family, and what's always happening? what does

the victim do as a delay method or as a stalling method or to save themselves? They make themselves known to their captors, right? Now, I realize this is a terribly flawed analogy for what we're talking about here, but let's go with it for a second.

So we have these victims, these people who have been fallen victim to somebody, and they are making themselves known. Why are they making themselves known? So that they will become real people to their captors with the idea that if you make yourself really known, you become a real person to your captor. It's a lot harder for that person to then do something awful to you or your family. That's the idea, right?

So it's a terrible analogy, but I do think terrible analogies have their place, because you'll remember them. So in the same vein, if you make yourself a real person with dreams and aspirations, especially you students, really make yourself known in your community to your teachers, to your peers, because the more people know you,

the easier it is to really want to work with you and for you within your community.

I've had the good fortune of tutoring a number of students with disabilities during my own education, and one of them was -- his name was Josh. He was a fifth grader at an elementary school in the town that I went to law school in, in Williamsburg, Virginia, and he was a movie aficionado. He could tell you anything about any movie, all the way back to, you know, the dawn of motion pictures. He could tell you anything. He could tell you where actors and actresses were born. He could tell you how directors got their start. He was incredible.

And movies were his passion, and he let you know that pretty early on. He would tell you who you reminded him of. If you said something that reminded him of a movie quote, he would quote the movie and then tell you when the movie came out, which distribution company put it out, et cetera, et cetera. He was a movie aficionado.

He had cerebral palsy, and a lot of

people in his school system in the administration level really had capped expectations for Josh. They didn't -- they didn't see him as going quite as far as his peers. And they never said that out loud, but you could tell. You could tell in the way that they interacted with him.

And Josh and I had a hoot. We just had such a good time together. And one of the things I quickly realized was that his parents were enabling some of that low expectation for him. And they didn't have expectations of Josh going to college despite the fact that he had all As and Bs in his elementary school program and exceeded the norm in testing in his test results, his standardized test results.

And one of the things I did is I came up with a list of actors and actresses and directors who had disabilities, and I gave that to Josh. And I said, don't you ever, ever let anyone tell you that you can't go to film school, that you can't make movies, that you shouldn't ask on your Christmas wish list for a MAC book or whatever you

need to enable you to make movies and pursue your dreams. You're going to be awesome.

And he said that the first job he wanted in high school, he said I know that I could probably do more with myself, but I want to become the first person who taste tests and rates popcorn in movie theaters. (Laughter) And I'm all about customized employment, so I told him I thought that was a great idea.

And through the course of my tutoring him, we actually came up with several letters that were written more on a legal standpoint and signed by his parents, eventually who came around and Josh himself when we wrote movie theaters that weren't in compliance to the ADA. We wrote the Justice Department, all kinds of people.

And he started getting empowered in the fifth grade to tell people when they were violating the ADA or consult with a lawyer, he said that I was his lawyer. It was before I was certified. He started learning to advocate for himself at a young age. And it took one person.

And I'm not here to give myself a big pat on the back for doing that, but the point is, it took one person who he made himself known to who was the right person to advocate for him. Once I advocated for him just a little bit, it really took root inside of Josh, and he started doing it for himself. So, again, make yourself known.

My mother is a teacher of English as a second language. My mother is an immigrant from Germany, and had to go through the rigamarole of being a student who couldn't speak English when she arrived in this country. So she's very empathetic to students who arrive from all over the globe and can't speak English.

So my mother is also, interestingly, just quite a sage when it comes to the topics of accommodations and customized education and employment, because she has had literal four- to six-week periods where she has not spoken a word of English to a student who doesn't speak English and yet she's had meaningful conversations with them. I'm sure all of you in this room know what

I'm talking about.

You can have a student with a disability who is completely nonverbal and yet know very, very much about them. There are communication styles and methods we all have. Raised eyebrows, cocked heads. All kinds of things. We have symbols that tell each other what we mean when we're not talking at all. It's a secret language that we all share with each other, and some of the languages are a little more encrypted than others, but all of them are tappable, I'm convinced.

So I really encourage all of you teachers and counselors and anybody in the room who advocates on behalf of a student who may be nonverbal to just really tap into the language that they have. They all have one. Every one of us has a language that we can tap into.

I went to Virginia Tech for undergraduate. And this was directly after I had been a student in a high school with only 87 in the graduating class. Virginia Tech had 35,000 undergrads. So it was quite a culture shock when

I went to the little bumpkin town of Blacksburg and found myself in freshman classes of 500 to 1,000 students. Much bigger than my whole high school combined. So the skills that I learned from a young age in terms of making myself known to my teachers and my peers really played out and served me well once I got to college, because it was the same act, just different actors. So it was a much bigger stage, but it was the same -- same behavior that I had engaged in all those years before.

So when you make yourselves known, students, realize that you're aiding yourself in good skills for life, not only for the transition from school to perhaps higher education, but also in the job -- the job place and work skills. Because you'll need those skills for interviews. You'll need them once you're on the job for accommodations. Learning to make yourself known, talking about yourself positively, not apologizing for your disability, but speaking positively of your disability as an aspect of yourself.

And, again, I would just like to encourage teachers, especially during the discovery process, which we talked about earlier today, to really listen and learn, but also make yourselves known.

I think with all the forums and standardized testing we have, you know, recently, we've really taken a lot of the humanity out of interactions with people. Everything is automated now. Everything you can do from your phone or on your computer, and we don't talk to each other anymore quite the same way we did.

And I think it's permeating into all aspects of society, including education. You know, inasmuch as we can cultivate commonalities, you can help your students relate to you just like you're relating to them. And if they can relate to you a little bit more just in the same way that you're relating to them more, it just makes everything more meaningful. And it makes the days go by faster, and it makes your job a lot easier and more joy filled.

Tip number two, make a system that works for you. Who in this room understands the concept of organized chaos? Whose office looks like organized chaos?

Okay. Which of you use blackberries or any sort of palm pilot? A couple of you. Few of you. How about day planners, like a calendar? Okay. How about -- and this is my system, writing on your hand? Okay. A few of you. Excellent. I'm in good company.

We all have systems that we've found work for us. Required forms that we have to fill out in the classroom and on the job site, they are not going to go away, but that doesn't mean that all of us shouldn't be creating our own short documents to keep us organized and meaningfully engaged.

I was really heartened as I was flipping through the binder for the conference to see what appeared to be examples of this kind of template documents for the health care setting. And I'm really sorry that I'm going to have to miss

tomorrow's presentation about transitioning into health care, because that's something that would be very interesting, I think.

During the course of my disability, when I got into high school, I started noticing that I was waking up a lot of mornings with the feeling of having jammed my fingers on a basketball. Does everybody kind of have familiarity with that feeling? It feels awful. You don't want to grip anything. Your hands are swollen and sometimes they are hot. I started getting that more and more and more. And eventually I woke up one morning thinking, could I really be sleeping on my hands that funny for that many days in a row? And my jaw was locked shut. And I knew something was really up. And anything that's going to keep me from eating is just a real problem.

So I went to the doctor on that occasion, and I was very fortunate to see a very nationally renown rheumatologist later that afternoon who through a course of a couple of pinpricks was able to determine that I have an

autoimmune disease. And during the course of that discovery process and that's only been for about the last 15 years, I've come up with my own system of communicating with my rheumatologist, who is, although he's brilliant in the medical field, he is definitely not the best communicator, and I think a lot of us have interfaced with doctors like that.

So I bring in a piece of paper every single time with me. It's got a diagram of a stick figure on it, and I keep a daily log of what hurts where. And I log it. And when I go to him in the doctor's office, I bring my log, and it also has the following categories: what hurts? what are we discussing today? what prescriptions will you prescribe? what have we agreed to do? And when is my next appointment?

And I have him fill it out with me in the doctor's office every time I go see my rheumatologist. The first time I did this, he rolled his eyes and said my nurse will do that. I said, no, no, I paid my \$75 for my five minutes

with you and you're going to do it with me. I was very insistent. He didn't like that, but I think he's actually come around and he actually respects it and I bribe him with cookies at Christmas.

But my point is, that's a system that has worked for me. It's more meaningful to me than any piece of computer printed paper that they give me at the end of my visit. It's more meaningful than any bill that comes in the mail that explains the services that were provided to me.

It's my documentation of what happened, what happened in that transaction with my doctor. That's a system that works for me. And that's an analogy that can be carried over into the workplace and into the educational settings for students and teachers. And I would really encourage parents in particular, share systems that are working with you in your homes with the teachers and other community members and partners. Because once you establish a system that works, focus should then be kept on arriving at good

outcomes rather than on the process. So once you establish a system that works, let's focus on the outcomes, and then just implement the system that we have in place wherever we can.

And for teachers, especially, again, if you have nonverbal students or students who communicate in untraditional methods, establishing a system may involve a series of calls to their families or, you know, support people to identify people who do know the student's likes and dislikes and things that work with them and don't work with them in communication style. Systems should still be in place for these students as well. It doesn't matter what the level of functioning is. All students have systems that work. We just have to figure out what they are and then use them.

All right. One other analogy real quick, in law school, when I was going through that process, we were assigned clients. And they were actually clients, pretty scary that they were entrusting us with these people, but we were

supervised, of course, by practicing attorneys. And one thing that I did in this setting, and this was a lesson learned from my system with my doctor, was I came up with a form for my clients. And I had them fill out: what did we talk about today? what are you going to do after you leave the office today? And when is the next time we're meeting? It was a very simple form. And my supervising partner of our fake law firm would tell me this is just extra paperwork.

And I looked at him and I said, au contraire, because although they are receiving copious amounts of paper from us, this is the most meaningful piece of paper that they will take from this appointment. Because, again, they've now become an active participant and they were generating the document and we were instilling the idea of expecting more from our client as a partner. I think, again, these concepts of self-determination and teaching responsibility for a lot of students and a lot of parents and a lot of teachers, coming up with a system that's

personalized that may be in addition to, but meaningful, in addition to the standard forms that you have to fill out, makes a lot of sense for a lot of students.

Okay. Tip number three, and this one is a long one, but it's fun. And this one is predominantly for students and parents and VR counselors, but everyone listen up. Learn to play. Learn to play.

Somewhere between about the age of 13 and where we are now, which varies, but I'm going to say no one in the room is over 40, right? (Laughter) Somewhere between those ages, we stopped having fun. How many people in the room have a child, a sibling or a family member under the age of 10? Most of us. Okay. Do you know why you like them so much? Because they have cool toys. They know how to play. When I was growing up, my best gal pal who to this day is still my best gal pal of over 25 years, she and I for our whole childhood and I regret to admit, probably through our early adulthood, too, pretended we

were mice. Mice. Yes, like the, "I like cheese" mice. Oh, it sounded like lice. No, we did not pretend that we were lice. We pretended that we were mice. My name was Chip. Hers was Cheery. And we signed all of our letters this way. We did make the noise in greeting each other. This really did go up to very recently. And now she's married and has a child on the way, and we are in the process of negotiating a mouse name for her child, who she's expecting in the early new year.

But we played office, too. A lot of girls grew up playing house. We played office. And I don't know where we worked, but it was pretty great. We answered phones, and we signed and stamped, you know, voided checks that my parents would give us. And we were really important. The office would not have run without us.

And it was neat to role play, because it got me really interested in a setting -- a workplace setting at a very young age. So my mother instead of buying us baby dolls and things

like that, she would buy us fake phones. We would go to the office supply store with gift certificates when I was like five years old. We would buy invoices and things like that. And I got familiar with office supplies at a very young age. I had my first power stapler when I was seven, and it was my favorite Christmas gift. Why am I telling you this, you wonder? I don't know. No, I do know.

The real lesson here was that self-talk and role playing was invaluable to me. It was really invaluable to me. It is for all youth. It really is. It's not just for jobs. It's also for hobbies and learning styles. Because, really, what this is is the beginning of networking skills. It's the beginning of feeling things out, role playing. And I don't think we do enough of that with our youth right now, and I think that's an absolutely invaluable thing.

When you find something that brings you joy, it's not rocket science that you want to do it more willingly and it brings you a sense of

pride. It's definitely more sustainable to be doing something that you like than something you don't like.

So I'm interested in polling the room really quickly on who may have the worst job experience ever, and by experience, I mean job. So I'll start off by saying that the worst job I have ever had since I started working at 15 years of age was I was a recycling consultant, whatever that means. And I fished out commingled plastic out of trash cans, and there was a lot of other stuff in the trash cans. So it was a very unpleasant, disgusting job and the smell lingered for a long time after you showered. So that was my worst work experience.

who in the room has a horrendous work experience that you would like to share? Somebody has to. Think back, maybe it's been years ago. Please don't raise your hand if you're going to say the job you have now.

SPEAKER: [Not at microphone]

ANNE SOMMERS: That's pretty unpleasant.

Picking tobacco in 100-degree temperature. Who has one that they think could rival that?

SPEAKER: [Not at microphone]

ANNE SOMMERS: Who knew that Dairy Queen could be a traumatizing job. It gives it all new different shades for my next visit there.

SPEAKER: [Not at microphone]

ANNE SOMMERS: Well, I have no prize, but my own vote would go with your mushroom story because of the manure. Anybody else?

SPEAKER: [Not at microphone]

ANNE SOMMERS: That's very depressing. Logging fatal accidents for DOT. Okay. What is yours?

SPEAKER: [Not at microphone]

ANNE SOMMERS: I think that actually sounds like fun but -- (Laughter)

In the back.

SPEAKER: When I was a freshman in college, I answered an ad to do some reading for visually impaired student. It turns out she was doing an advance doctoral degree in reproductive

studies. I had to read the Kinsey Institute Report on Sex, and then all these various pornographic things.

ANNE SOMMERS: what a box I have opened.

(Laughter)

One more in the back.

SPEAKER: [Not at microphone]

ANNE SOMMERS: That's unfortunate.

Anybody else want to close us out with one last final story? All right. I saw you in the back first.

SPEAKER: [Not at microphone]

ANNE SOMMERS: And on that cheery note. Okay. So we've all had a taste, it sounds like, of really horrible jobs.

And what I can tell you about my own experience with horrible jobs of which I've had a couple, but the recycling was the worst, was that, without fail, every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday when I was supposed to show up, I did not want to get out of bed. I did not want to go. And once I was there, the minutes were literally, I guarantee

you, passing -- we were in a time warp every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. I promise you, the laws of science were broken on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, because time was not moving while I was there. It was awful. And why am I telling you this?

Well, I'm telling you this because I didn't know enough about myself and I didn't have the confidence in myself at that point to pursue a job even on an hourly basis that pleased me, brought me any amount of joy or had anything to do with things I wanted to do for the rest of my life. And I hated it. It wasn't sustainable. Pretty quickly after I was hired, I found a loophole to get out of it. A couple of times I started making all of my doctors appointments on those days and eventually I was fired.

I think that's what happens for a lot of people with disabilities. You probably heard the three Fs, food, flowers, and filth. And unfortunately, that's where a lot of youth with disabilities ended up getting placed. And job

sustainability, employment in general, has been a huge problem in our community. It's really no wonder why. We have a social security system that works against us, and we have a broken health care system. And people are afraid to go out on a limb and do anything that may bring them an ounce of joy for fear of losing their benefits or for fear of losing their health care coverage. And we have a real broken system that needs remedying.

I want to commend, briefly, Florida for all of the really stellar work that you guys have done, particularly the Florida VR for offering extra job coaches, as I understand. Is Bill Palmer in the room?

SPEAKER: [Not at microphone]

ANNE SOMMERS: Okay. Great. That's absolutely stellar. I want to commend you for that. I also want to commend all of you who may have participated in Florida's Disability Mentoring Day, which is a program that AAPD runs out of D.C., but Florida is one of the best states, if not "the" best state -- don't tell the

others -- in all of the country for participation and just having an absolutely stellar program. So congratulations on that as well. (Applause)

The reason why programs like DMD and internship programs like the ones we run in Washington at AAPD are so important is that they really get to the heart of role playing. They really do. You're playing.

You have an eight-week experience with getting to play in an office or play behind a computer with new systems, new people that you've never dealt with before. And you get to feel how that feels. And it's a low-risk investment, because eight weeks later, if you hate it, you try something new the next summer. And you've now determined that you never really want to work in a cubicle for as long as the rest of your life. Or you realize, you know what, I love automatic staplers and this is what I want to do for the rest of my life, like I did.

So, again, I would absolutely encourage all of you who may not be familiar with the

Disability Mentoring Day and internship programs like the ones we run at AAPD, to really investigate in those programs.

The one that we run in D.C., it's two prongs. And it's just for your general knowledge, in case you have some students who you think would be particularly apt to gravitate toward D.C., we have congressional internships which are eight weeks long. The student is placed in a congressional office on the Senate side or the House side, and they do work for the representative or for the senator, and they work with a lot of full-time staff that that representative may have.

And we've had a lot of really amazing success stories with that. We have one particularly shining star, Stacy Cervenka, who some of you may know. She started as an intern in 2004 through AAPD's Congressional Internship Program and was so well liked for her work product and as a person and as people got to know her and she made herself known in the office that she was

later hired full time and has been working for Senator Brownback now for three years.

She's already received several promotions and is climbing the ranks. So that's just one success story. Stacy is blind. And is becoming quickly -- she does moonlighting as an activist. But she makes sure she keeps things nice and sequestered off from her political career.

I also want to give you another cheesy analogy on this point, because, like I said, I really believe in the merit of cheese analogies.

The one I'll give you for this one that hopefully you'll remember, all of us have probably seen movies like where a kid is, you know, with his parent. His parent gets shot or something, and -- or he slumps over the wheel and the kid suddenly after playing video games the whole entire movie, takes the wheel and he can now drive better than any of us in the room, or he takes the controls on the aircraft and he's flying through the sky brilliantly and he lands the plane

perfectly.

It's completely cheesy, and we always think, oh, that's so Hollywood. But the analogy is there. If you put yourself in the setting, if you role play a lot in different settings with different people in different experiences, you really can get to a point where you're not so scared once you're in the real thing.

When I first had my first work experience after playing office for 15 years, I knew everything. I wasn't scared at all to enter into an office work setting because I had simulated one in my home for a number of years. So although that's a very cheesy analogy, very cheesy analogy, hopefully it will serve us well in remembering it.

A comment earlier was made in the last session before our break about extracurriculars with both normal, you know, nondisabled peers as well as disabled peers. And I really want to stress the importance from my perspective of being a part of the disability community and for youth

to really feel a part of something. Some of you saw my button or my pin earlier when we were talking. It says disabled and proud with a fist in the air. I like to be kind of in your face about the fact that I belong to a community. I belong to a movement. And I feel a great sense of empowerment and I feel a great sense of unity with other people with all different types of disabilities. And I think it's important that you feel connected to that. So I really commend the Youth Leadership Network for sending representatives here and for being actively engaged in conversations today.

This is America. We have all kinds of beautiful diversity, do we not? One size most certainly does not fit all. We have custom cell phones. We have custom ring tones. We have custom laptops, braces, retainers, cars. Why is the concept of customized employment so difficult for us to grasp hold of?

My brother always said growing up that I had monkey arms. He called me monkey arms on a

shrimp's body. His point was that if I didn't hire a tailor for my store-bought clothes, I would look pretty silly. But what's more tragic than old monkey arms in an untailed shirt is a child pushed into a job that she neither likes nor has any interest in.

Customizing employment for students trains employers as well as the students. When we talk about reasonable accommodations for adults in the workforce, wouldn't it be wonderful if they had experiences with youth previous to these other accommodations that are required by law so that they could get trained, essentially primed for the rest of the workforce?

I want to spend a brief moment speaking about the policy work that I'm working on right now in D.C. If there's anybody in the room who has not heard of the Americans with Disabilities Act, I'll be very, very scared.

The ADA is essentially our floor of protection. It is our emancipation proclamation for our community. It's our civil rights law.

And it forms the base and floor on which all other policies, including education and employment policies can be built up on and from. But our floor is crumbling. The ADA is crumbling.

We have Supreme Court decisions recently, as recent as May of this last year. The Federal Court, the Circuit Court in the 11th Circuit, I believe it's in Alabama, decided that a student with intellectual disabilities who wanted to be a cart wrangler at wal-Mart -- are any of you familiar with this case? Some of you are. I'll briefly outline it.

The student, I believe that he was finishing up his high school career. He was in his early 20s, and he was working through an independent living center in Alabama. And he decided he wanted to work at wal-Mart because it was a store he really liked. The job coach he was working with through the independent living center helped him locate a possible job at wal-Mart as a cart wrangler in the parking lot. And through the course of the back and forth with wal-Mart, they

said that he needed to come in and interview just like any other applicant, to which he agreed, but the job coach worked out an understanding that because there were particular communication barriers for this student, that he would be allowed to bring a job coach in with him to the interview. Wal-Mart agreed.

The day of his interview came, and Wal-Mart said, no, we never had that conversation. In fact, we're not going to permit this job coach in at all. The student bravely went in by himself, did very poorly, unfortunately, in his interview, and was not hired. The IL Center tried to work with Wal-Mart to figure something out after it, maybe have a second interview with the job coach. Wal-Mart declined.

They eventually sued. It went to the Circuit Court in the 11th Circuit and the Circuit Court found that this student with significant intellectual disabilities was not disabled for purposes of the ADA's protections. They rationalized that because he could drive a

car and because he was obviously seeking employment, that he was basically not impaired in enough major life activities to be constituted disabled under the ADA. This is one of the most egregious cases that we've had in recent years, but there have been several others that would just absolutely astound you involving people with epilepsy, diabetes, HIV, cancer. These are no-brainers.

And yet they have been determined by not only the Circuit Courts, but by the Supreme Court of this country as not disabled for protections of the ADA.

The reason why I mention this in this speech is that there is currently legislation in the House side and in the Senate side called the ADA Restoration Act. The reason why it's so important is, again, if we don't have that base on which we can pile other policies, if we have a crumbling floor, then we're in bad shape as a community. And the students who then get out into the workforce and transition into higher education

and eventually employment are going to find if they have any difficulties in the workplace, they are not going to be guaranteed protections.

So I urge all of you, if you're not familiar with that piece of legislation, just a little plug to look into it.

There's lots of information on our web site about it. It's aapd.org -- or dot com. Aapd.org is the American Association of Pediatric Dentists. So we are a dot com for that reason. If you go to our site and click on news, the top link is ADA Restoration. And there's plenty of information on this legislation. I really encourage you to look at it and figure out how it might tie into what you're doing with transitioning.

I mentioned AAPD's Disability Mentoring Day and internship programs. And I kind of want to just really briefly mention that the AAPD, as you may be able to tell through me, is impatient and dissatisfied with the status quo in this country for people with disabilities. Grossly

dissatisfied. It's worth taking a quick moment to reflect on history. Okay?

In 1956, that's when we determined the legislative language around the Social Security Act, SSDI eligibility. So it was in 1956 that the government decided that eligibility for SSDI benefits would be on the basis of an inability to work.

That means when a student is 18 years old, if they wanted access to cash benefits that would help them in overcoming a lot of the obstacles they have to gainful employment, they have to go down to the social security office and swear in oath that they cannot work. That's based on expectations that were in place in this country in 1956. That's SSA. The Medicaid and Medicare programs were formed in 1965. Let's think a second for what the country looked like for people with disabilities in 1965.

In 1965, there were a number of states that still had forcible sterilization laws on the books for people with disabilities. And actually,

some of you may know that certain states in this country, although they may not be used, still have those laws on the books. And this was during the upswing of American eugenics in this country.

Expectations were so low for people with disabilities that they were warehoused away in institutions. Out of sight, out of mind. This was pre-ADA. Pre-curb cuts. Pre-braille on ATM machines. This is when people with disabilities were expected so little out of, nobody dealt with them. They just put them away. They warehoused them. That was a scary time in our country. And we like to think we've come a long way since then.

And in a lot of ways we have, but we still have systems, Social Security and Medicaid and Medicare built on those expectations from 1956 and 1965. No wonder they don't work for us.

We want to see AAPD and I know a bunch of you in the room want to see radical shifts. And one of the things we want shifted is the mentality in our society and in government for maintaining people with disabilities to investing

in people with disabilities as a society and as a government.

How many of you know Berthy De La Rosa-Aponte? Bunch of you probably do. She has been an absolute stalwart disability advocate, and we're just absolutely so proud of her and impressed by her. And many of you know that she's chairing the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Panel. Their final report to the President and Congress is coming out very soon. And in it, they will charge the President and Congress with recommendations of shifting in a radical way from maintaining people in a poverty trap, a lot of your students who are on SSI and SSDI benefits, from shifting from a maintaining people with disabilities to an investing in them so that they can have more opportunity to overcome barriers that are in their way to gainful employment.

So I just mention all of those things as a long-winded aside that if you're not familiar with them, that you should quickly become acquainted with all of these topic matters.

Because although they are national in scope, they will impact Florida and what you're doing very, very much.

My fourth and final tip would be to become an army of Davids. What I do mean by that -- what do I mean by that?

well, my Sunday schoolteacher probably would be very embarrassed right now, but I don't actually remember if it was one or two rocks, but the story went that David was a smaller, average-sized man and Goliath was a giant. And with a slingshot and one or two rocks, he was able to take out the giant. Okay?

So, I reference that because we have lots of Goliaths in front of us. Okay? We have the "you can'ts." We have the "you'll nevers." We have the impossible employers. We have the overprotective parents. We have society that still thinks we can't do, we won't do, that we're a drain, that we're a burden. We see words like this in the media even.

But each of us as a part of a whole is a

powerful force to be reckoned with. Teachers, parents, counselors, all youth, regardless of their functioning, their level of functioning, have a voice. They have desires. They have a very real, very important place in this world.

And I encourage all of you to take time to listen and learn from them and cultivate, elevate, and incorporate their voices into everything you do and every goal that you set. It sounds like a Whitney Houston song, but they are the future. We are the future.

Students who are here, please know your power. There are 75 million of us born between 1977 and 1997. That's more than the baby boom generation.

And it is exceptionally hard -- I was talking earlier to the Fay family -- it's exceptionally hard for a D.C. or a state legislature to blow off youth that come into their office. It's very hard. They are used to paid lobbyists who have gold cuff links, drive expensive cars, easy to blow them off. Very, very

hard to blow off a youth that comes into their office with a message for them.

I encourage all of you students if you haven't already -- and I imagine most of you have -- register to vote. Please register to vote. Demand more credibility and authenticity from your elected officials, and encourage them and urge them and require them, if necessary, by doing whatever you need to do to make their issues your issues. What I mean by that is have them frame everything they are talking about in their political campaigns in the light of disability. It's a hard, hard thing to do, but it can be done.

The reason I have to leave right after this session is I'm flying up to New Hampshire because we are having a Presidential Candidates Forum on Disability on Friday. Some of you may be aware of that; some of you may not. Those of you who are not aware of it, we are webcasting it live. You can, again, get information on that from our web site. And we have a pretty good showing of candidates showing up, including

Senator Clinton. And we're posing nothing but disability related questions on education, transitions, health care, social security reform. All the things we talked about today. We're forcing them to answer, go on the record talking about our issues. If we all work together as an army of Davids, we could defeat a Goliath. We could absolutely be a powerful voting bloc. So I encourage, again, all the youth to register to vote if you have not already.

One other thing I'll mention to the students is the power of blogs as a new tool for young leaders with disabilities. It's a way that you can build community and consciousness around your disability. There were 1.4 million blogs in the last election. And now for this election, there are 71 million blogs. And it sounds like, oh, well, who needs another blog.

Well, I'll tell you what, a lot of things, a lot of news comes out in the blogs before it comes out in the news sources now. And a lot of the activity around the Jena Six ordeal

in Louisiana, it was all generated through blogs. Blogs are exceptionally powerful for youth. And it can basically take anybody with any amount of disability, anything that you think would be insurmountable and it can give you a voice, where nationally anyone can read your blog. Your voice will instantly be amplified.

So I encourage all of you who have any thoughts, any rants you want to share, share them online and get people invested in your blog site. I really think that's going to be, again, like essentially the printing press, the blogs and the Internet are for our generation.

well, I kept my favorite nickname for last. As a concluding thought, it really is the culmination of implementing these tips into my own life. The best nickname that I have is "mighty mouse." It has nothing to do with my friend's nickname and child play with me.

Let me explain. During my surgeries, I had to go through a pretty horrendous ordeal. Each of my hips, as it was being reconstructed,

they broke the giant mass of my pelvis into four spots on each side and rotated the pieces out and infused it with titanium and then severed the top of my femur off and put in a metal one. Then they pinned it all together and put me on bed rest for three months while it all healed up.

Once it healed up, they sat me upright and let me try to walk on it. They disconnected and reconnected all the nerves and joints and muscles. As a result of all that, I lost all of the feeling in both of my thighs and a little bit down the front of my right leg. It was quite an ordeal. Quite an ordeal. Lots of gangrene infections. It was a horrendous ordeal.

But during that process, I had to go through the tips that I just told you about. And that was really sort of the first time that I was a self-advocate for myself, that it wasn't just my parents advocating for me.

For instance, I made myself known. I made it very clear to my nurses who lived in the home with us for several months that daily basin

washing of my hair was essential. I would not do powder showers. I had to look my best at all times, and I insisted on daily basin washings. I learned to play. I learned a new graphics program on my PC, which was next to my bedside. We had mounted the computer screen up on my wall so I could lay on my back and type on my computer, and I began doing freelance work for money while I was on bed rest. Once I started physical therapy, I took to boxing, and I took to lifting weights. I thought it was a lot of fun. I had never been active in a gym before.

I found a system that worked for me. I employed principles of self-determination when I fired my physical therapist after two weeks and I hired an ex-marine. And I brought that ex-marine in, because I just was not progressing rapidly enough for my own liking and I was stir crazy.

So I hired an ex-marine who ended up doing my physical therapy and she pushed me so hard in the gym that I started lifting more and more and more. Eventually I became an army of

Dauids all by myself because I really took to the gym. And I like to wear a shirt when I go to the gym that says "I lift like a disabled girl." And I wore that the first time I became a Virginia state champion in power lifting, dead lifting 330 pounds in March of 2004. (Applause)

So, again, just to recap, the tips that I gave you today is: Make yourself known. That's not just for students. That's for educators. That's for parents. Make yourself known.

The second tip I gave you was make a system that works for you.

The third tip was learn to play. And I think that's the most important one for all of us. We take ourselves a little bit too seriously.

And the fourth one is become an army of Davids. Thank you so much for your time today, and I'm happy to entertain any questions you might have. (Applause)

SPEAKER: [Not at microphone]

ANNE SOMMERS: I'm probably less suited to answer the question. The question was, whether

I could speak to including students with significant developmental disabilities and cognitive impairments in the youth leadership movement. And I regret that I wasn't able to also bring the program manager that we just recently hired at AAPD, David Hale, who is now our Program Manager for Disability Mentoring Day, our internship programs and our youth development area. We just recently hired him. He's very high energy. I encourage all of you to get to know him.

One way that we have been able to incorporate people with all different levels of disability in meaningful ways is -- I'll say this, even on the board level of our organization, we have self-advocates. We believe everybody at any point in a disability or any point in their experience has something to contribute to our organization and to the movement at large.

And one of the ways that we've been doing it in particular that I can speak to again from this presidential forum that we're having

this Friday is self-advocates becoming empowered, which is a national organization of self-advocates, who is just absolutely stellar. They are one of our biggest national sponsors for our forum, and they contributed over seven questions to pose to the candidates. And again, we just went to them and said, what would you want to ask anybody who is becoming president of this country? And they gave us seven questions instantly that were honest and absolutely on point.

And, again, you know, I just encourage anyone anywhere to tap into the system that works for people with all levels of disability and the language that people communicate in, the natural language they communicate in.

SPEAKER: what would you say to youth who say they want to be self advocates or advocates for other youth across the State of Florida or other communities?

ANNE SOMMERS: I'm sorry. Can you repeat the question again?

SPEAKER: what would you say to youth, the reason why they should be advocates for their self and their community? what would you say to them?

ANNE SOMMERS: General advice?

SPEAKER: Yes.

ANNE SOMMERS: I think one of the most important things that I'm learning is to know, just like any other, we talk a lot about the disability community as a movement and as a culture, and I think every culture has language. Every culture has history. And I don't think we spent enough time cultivating both of those things in our community. We do a lot of activist work and we do a lot of complaining about the injustices, and rightly so.

But a lot of us don't understand the history of where our disability laws came from. We don't understand the leaders who came before us and why, they were in many ways, not ideal leaders. And I think a lot of people are uncomfortable when I say that. But we have great

leaders in our community. A lot of them are not the best leaders, and they didn't necessarily learn from their mistakes. And I think we need to, you know, talk frankly about leadership in our community and talk about what it is to be a good leader.

We have a lot of -- exceptionally large number of white male leaders in our community. And there's nothing wrong with that, but it's not exactly a diverse group of leadership given how diverse our community is.

So I would say learn the culture better, so learn the history of Disability Rights Movement and the history of oppression that went along with.

A lot of people don't know about the Eugenics Movement. I'm ever surprised at how few people know, for instance, that we do literally still have states that have forcible sterilization laws on the books for people with disabilities and learn the language. And what I mean by that is, it's a very colorful, very diverse language. A

lot of people speaking in a lot of different ways and sensitizing ourselves to the differences that we all have to be able to communicate effectively.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

ANNE SOMMERS: Any other questions at all?

SPEAKER: [Not at microphone]

ANNE SOMMERS: That's actually a question that is being bandied about quite a bit in Washington right now. There have been recent studies out that you're probably familiar with highlighting the inaccessibility of health care and a lot of the equipment. And I know -- I don't remember which schools, unfortunately, which universities are studying it to give you the references, but there is legislation being talked about in terms of remedying that situation in particular.

And what's interesting is, again, the impetus in talking about disability for so many legislators is the aging population. It's not because they've suddenly gotten really sensitive

to our community. It's because there's a whole generation that's aging and acquiring disabilities. But it's an interesting topic.

The other topic that goes along with that is physical fitness equipment in gyms that are completely inaccessible for, not just youths, but obviously adults with disabilities. And a lot of the comorbidities that crop up with disability because of inaccessible physical accessibility of gyms and fitness equipment.

But in terms of whether or not the ADA actually speaks to that, I apologize for not being an absolute expert on that topic.

SPEAKER: How long did it take you to be able to get to the 330 pounds?

ANNE SOMMERS: Not very long, which was interesting. My father's first generation Swedish, and I don't know if any of you watch strong men competitions, but there's a lot of Swedes in strong men competition. So I guess I have good DNA for it. I don't know. I think anger drives a lot of bar pushing or bar pulling,

depending on the lift. So a lot of times when you're angry, you're able to do more in the gym.

SPEAKER: [Not at microphone] We're supposed to train our teachers to teach self-determination in the classrooms. Sometimes they say teachers -- a lot of times these teachers don't come to the trainings, so we don't really get the message to the students.

Do you have any suggestions for inspiring or engendering in these students across the board and when they are little kids to be proud of themselves, to feel good about themselves, to be self advocates and to be motivated enough to stand up for themselves without us being in the middle and being responsible because we don't get there a lot of times?

ANNE SOMMERS: Sure. And just for reference sake, where do you work?

SPEAKER: Program Specialist in Broward County for transition.

ANNE SOMMERS: Great. I think one of

the missing links -- and I'm not sure if this is happening in Florida at any level, is youth again. Youth with disabilities mentoring, youth with disabilities. When on the phone with Nila in the planning stages of this I commented, I wonder how long I'll still be considered a youth. Is 30 the magic number and then you're just an old FART or what happens?

But I think, you know, since I am considered still youth with disability, I feel it's very important for me to mentor young children with disabilities and middle schoolers and high schoolers with disabilities and really cultivate a sense of pride and a sense of identity with one's disability.

And I think that's a missing piece, because teenagers especially in general, disabled or not, you know, when parents tell their teenager something, they roll their eyes. They don't want to listen to you. They just zone out.

The same thing with teachers. All of you are the enemy right now to a large extent.

And having a teenage sister right now is ever reminding me that even I am not cool to my sister on some levels as I continue to age.

But I think establishing a core network, whether it's the youth leadership network and counsels to come alongside some of these youth with disabilities or whether it's something less formal. Readily identifying people that you can either in the course of the school day network with or outside of the school try to get them in touch with -- to sort of peer mentor them. I think that's absolutely invaluable.

That's one of the reasons I found it so rewarding to mentor in the public school system for students with disabilities was, again, usually the two-prong response to me when I first came in. Sometimes I walk with a cane, two crutches or on occasion I will use a wheelchair. So I sort of have varied pain needs from day to day.

But when I have come in on Canadian crutches, again, it's like, oh, do you need a seat, do you need this, this and this? And it's

been interesting because one of the first things out of the administrator's mouth in this particular school district was well, you know, aren't you amazing that you went to college. And that you've now gone to law school.

And that's why, again, I like to wear shirts that say I lift like a disabled girl, because, again, I think when you pair people up with folks who have been fortunate enough to succeed in various avenues, whether it's education or employment or both, it sets the vision.

It casts the vision for the student with the disability, and it inspires them. And inasmuch as you can pair them with people with the same disability, that's even more powerful, obviously. Any other questions?

SPEAKER: I just wanted to say real quick, the mentoring of youth with disabilities, it does -- I'm in part of the Florida Youth Leadership Forum, and I have seen changes with students just over three days of youth, mentoring youth about different things, about being involved

in advocacy and stuff that's going on in their life, other people with other types of disabilities in their life, seems that they are the same and not going through the same problems -- they are not alone.

They are not going through a problem and they are the only person out there. If they know there are people getting talked to the same way by teachers, or bullied the same way, it makes a whole world of difference. And you can see it. When you see people come from my left and some of the coaches and staff people are here, actually, today. You'll have to let them tell you a little bit more about why I --

SPEAKER: I just had a quick comment. I really loved your Army of David metaphor. But just a side note, David picked up five stones. He used one stone to kill the Goliath who was a giant, but Goliath had four brothers who were also giants. So he picked those up in anticipation. And I think that's even more important for your metaphor.

ANNE SOMMERS: Thank you very much. And don't tell my Sunday schoolteacher. (Laughter)

SPEAKER: [Not at microphone]

ANNE SOMMERS: why did I not give up? I think I was just doing what came naturally.

And I do think I had an exceptional -- I do have an exceptional pair of parents and a very intact support network. My family is very, very tight knit.

I had a brother two years older than me that would punch the living lights out of anybody who gave his sister any problems, which was a nice added bully deterrent going through school, which a lot of students aren't fortunate enough to have. And I have parents who are exceptionally involved in my education process and remain very involved in my life.

Nothing was out of bounds for me. My father is a nuclear engineer and my mother is an educator, but she's an artist by training. So I go everything from rolling around in paint as a kid to robotics and model rockets. So I was

exposed to a lot. And I think that helped me identify similarities with a lot of peers that would otherwise have not been in my circle of friends.

And it also exposed me to a lot at a very young age so that I was able to kind of see myself as able to do a lot of different things. And I determined at a pretty young age that it was better to do, in my own assessment, better to do a lot of different things okay than one thing really well. And that's the slant I took, and it's opened up a lot of doors for me. So that's probably my impromptu answer.

Any other last questions? Let me give you my e-mail address if any of you want to get in touch with me after today, I'm happy to talk to any of you.

And let me also make you aware of the e-mail listserv that I run. It's called the Justice For All listserv. It's a service of AAPD. It's free. Anyone can sign up for it. If you e-mail me, I'm happy to e-mail you details on how

to get subscribed. It comes out daily, and we send out alerts, action alerts on legislation, we also send out dates about things like this disability forum that the presidential candidates are coming to. And if you're not engaged around the election, I encourage you to be engaged.

And again, on our web site, we sent out questionnaires to all the presidential candidates, and we've received responses back from, I think, six or seven of them on specific disability topics including employment and education and transitions. And all of their answers are posted for you to view. If you're not familiar with where the candidates stand on issues that you deal with every day, you can see where a bunch of them are standing by visiting our web site. My e-mail address is aapdanne@earthlink.net.

I'll give you my phone number, too, if that's easier for any of you. It's 202-457-0046. It's on my card, which I don't have with me. Somebody has my card in this room. Okay. It's on page 17 of the program is the 800 number. Feel

free to call that number as well. If any of you need TTY, also, both of those lines are compatible with that as well. Thank you again. (Applause)

JOYCE LUBBERS: Thank you, Anne. That was amazing and wonderful. Thank you. We're going to have a small break, and then we're going to return here at 3:15 for a collaboration and interagency program by two county teams. So please enjoy your break and come right back here at 3:15.

[Recess]

*** LEADERSHIP TEAM PRESENTATION:

COLLABORATION/INTERAGENCY ***

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2007

3:15 P.M.

J.B. BLACK: I'm J.B. Black with the Agency for Persons with Disabilities. I'm here today for Jane Johnson who sends her regrets for not being able to be here today. As you well know, we're going through quite a few things in Tallahassee with our budgets and with the cutbacks and things going on with that. But she sends her regrets and wants to, again, let you know the importance that she and we place upon transition and doing an effective transition for the people that we support.

That becomes even more important as we are in some tough times this year. I sat down a couple of days ago and talked with her. And one of the things she reminded me of is later on, probably in January, we'll be forced once again to look very closely at our budgets and may very well

have to go through another exercise of budget cutting. And the issue with that is, with that type of fiscal responsibility occurring, that we're going to be placing even more emphasis on collaboration and working together.

And one of the things -- again, I'm the training and research director and one of the responsibilities I have is employment, supported employment. I've been involved in working in that area for the past 32 years.

One of the frustrations I've had and one of the areas I'm hoping we'll continue to collaborate and work better together is making sure that AAPD find the funds to serve anybody that comes out of school with a developmental disability that needs employment services. We've had some this past year. We had a reasonable amount of money, and then it dropped back. And now we're questioning again to have some money. I'm hoping that will be an ongoing part because for Voc Rehab and Department of Education staff, have an ongoing funding for people who come out

with a job, schools with a job or comes out of VR with a job I think it's crucial for us working together and collaborating together.

Our relationships with DOE and with VR have been ongoing and growing and developing. We have quite a few projects during the next few years that we'll be working on together.

All of that from Tallahassee will mean nothing if we don't have the local collaboration in working together. For that very reason, the opportunity that we have here today is something that I think that we can build on, something that is of paramount importance and something that I think we should be proud of the collaboration that we can do.

Tallahassee and state government and central offices can point in the right direction sometimes. But where things really occur and where the real rubber meets the road is locally. And that's the reason having these meetings is the opportunity for us to take some of the ideas and directions we'd like to go and find ways to

implement those. We are very proud to be a part of that, and appreciate all the effort with Nila and DD Council and all the work that's going on in putting this together and we're pleased to be a part of it.

I'm pleased to introduce one panel that is consisting of two counties, Palm Beach and Sarasota. And I will hopefully do a decent job with the names. But we're going to talk some about this collaboration that's so crucial to the transitions that we've been doing.

To my left is Melinda Boynton, who is a VR Supervisor in the Palm Beach area. And the first four individuals are from the Palm Beach area. We also have Genevieve Cousminer who is the Executive Director of Coalition for Independent Living Options. Next to her is Al Flores, Youth Transition Coordinator for United Way of Palm Beach County. And next to him is Iris Neil, and she is -- as a matter of fact, I didn't get your title, but a teacher -- a planner for transition in the Palm Beach area. Also from Sarasota, we

have Sarah Hickey, Transition Specialist there, and Susan Magers who is the Parent Partner. Again, they will share with us some of the efforts and a couple of local collaborations that they've found that's worked.

SUSAN MAGERS: Good afternoon.

Sometimes when we think about our job as parents and as educators and as other professionals, we think, gosh, it would just be easier if we could do it all ourselves because then we have control. And then as we start to look at it, we realize that it's really necessary for us to collaborate and work together and cross those invisible lines that seem to exist to have the outcomes for our children and our students that we all desire.

As I was thinking about this presentation, I thought, though, the one thing I always hear when we sit down at planning meetings is, well, what is the 800-pound elephant in the room and how are we going to eat it? One bite at a time.

The problem with that in transition,

it's not an elephant, it's an octopus. So if you try to eat it one bite at a time and one tentacle, those other seven come around and getcha.

But if you do it as a team and everybody is working on it from different directions and you're working towards the middle and the child is the focus of that effort, then we can get to the desired outcome and we contain the octopus. I can tell you in Sarasota we certainly struggle, but I think we have three of those tentacles that we're sitting on. The other five are still wavering and we're trying to quite figure it out.

We have a long history of working together collaboratively in our district. I've been as parent liaison in Sarasota County for seven years, and it was in place well before I started. Where Sarasota and Manatee County were together as an original project connect site. And they really focused on trying to build those relationships in the community to work together. And to bring best practices and make sure that what we were doing was focused on the needs of the

people that each organization served and trying to bridge those gaps that exist.

And then each of those counties came to the first PIT Summit and we came as separate teams and we started the planning process. And what we realized, I think towards the end of that, is that our counties, we're in very different places. Some of the things that worked really well in Manatee did not work in Sarasota and some of the things that were working in Sarasota, were not working in Manatee. And so our project connect site disbanded.

And we took a little breather and we tried to regroup. And I think that that's an important piece of this collaborative effort is you will definitely have fluctuations that you'll be working together as a team and one team member leaves and goes on, and the team starts to fall apart a little bit or as we are right now, there's no funding. I mean, every time we brought something up today, in the morning session, it was like, well, if only there was funding. So it's

really a challenge to stay together and remain collaborative as you're trying to think, how do we just do the bare necessities of what we've been charged with?

So then we were very fortunate to have Sarah Hickey come on as our new Transition Specialist in our district. And a lot of people who have been working in the transition process for a long time came back together, and we reformed our own Project Connect site in Sarasota County. And we are back here again as a team for the third summit and working on trying to develop our strategic plan.

And at the time when we left the first summit, our priorities were really getting the third party agreement with VR in place, establishing our VIP work sites for our students in the community, and providing training for our countywide job coaches and school-based transition planners on each of our high school campuses.

I think we have really made progress in those initiatives. They are ongoing. We continue

to build on that. And then last year, we had a summit in April. We tried to bring all of our community partners together and to build a mission statement and guiding principles and set priorities and make sure that we were all headed in the same direction.

SARAH HICKEY: As a result of that summit meeting, we did come up with the help from the transition center and Lisa, and they flew in from Miami, and they helped us develop a mission statement and what Susan was saying, the guiding principles. So we were all excited. We had our first meeting. There was probably about 35, 40 people there. We spent a lot of time choosing the right place so people would want to come. We made fancy invitations. We hand delivered things. We made a big list of who we should invite and who was going to deliver what so we had everybody on the list that we wanted there.

So after the meeting was over, we had one more meeting. Well, this time, the group sort of already got smaller. We were kind of looking

around and most of the people left were school board employees. And some people said, here we go again. This is what happened last time. All the agencies and community partners sort of drop off and then it's all left back on the school board to do all the work.

So we kind of were not sure what was going on. We pushed on. And then it was summertime. So everybody left for summer break except for me. I was there working, and I get a phone call from a friend who says, do you know that there's this meeting that's going on that I really think you need to go to, and I don't think that you know about it.

well, it was all about developmental disabilities in Sarasota County, and what were the top priority issues that our county as a whole needed to look at. So I show up at the meeting. I thought I was going to sit there and listen and figure out what was going on, and come to find out, this group was established from a larger alliance group called the Community Alliance. And

the Community Alliance came out of a state statute and tells how to form the alliance and who needs to be on it. And in Sarasota County, there are over a hundred members on the Community Alliance, and they have a steering committee of 48 members.

And on the 48 members, there are specific seats for 18 different human services providers. And they included the local government, all the funding foundations, the businesses, all different agency representations, family representation, and I'm just sitting there like, wow, this is already done. We have everybody here, and they have monthly meetings, and the people come.

So this group that I went to the meeting on, was a subgroup that was asked to come up with the top five priorities that Sarasota County is facing for persons with disabilities. And everybody is sitting around and I kind of told them what our group was doing and I thought maybe we needed to merge because we're trying two different groups to work on the same thing and

half of the people that were at that meeting were at our meeting. So we put our heads together and we decided to collaborate and merge. And then we had the next meeting and nothing was getting accomplished. We were talking around and around and around and I said, Susan, we need to call Lisa. Lisa and Tara came to our next meeting and facilitated the Community Alliance subgroup for us. And they did a very interesting activity with us.

They came in and they put up three big flip charts around the room and gave us all sticky notes and asked us to look at living, employment, and school, and to come up with our concerns and issues in each of the areas.

So our group did that, and then they themed them and they came up with a list of all the themes, the concerns, the issues that our group came up with. Then we were handed a hundred dollars of fake money and asked to look at the list and spend our money where we would spend it on what we thought was important.

So we were able to narrow down this huge list of issues into the top five priorities which this group was supposed to present back to the steering committee of the Community Alliance in Sarasota County.

SUSAN MAGERS: And so here we go to the next meeting and actually all the partners are still showing up and we think this is a really wonderful place for this collaboration to continue.

And very interesting that the number one priority that the work group came up with was providing access to information for individuals with disabilities and their families. It came out as an overriding theme in everything that we did. And it aligns with the guidepost in your strategic plan of what families of youth with disabilities need. And then our other priorities and we've been asked to link them back to the strategic plan, like, how is this helping you?

But our other priorities were housing, which falls under the strategic plan, priority

four, transportation, which falls under, also within that connecting activities strand, and employment. And then our other two were respite services and early intervention. So that information will be reported back to our Community Alliance which will go to our county councilmen to look at for funding priorities.

And we feel that there are a number of benefits from being part of this larger group, which include --

SARAH HICKEY: The first thing we found out is that nobody really knew what any of the other agencies were doing or who was really providing what. So we were able to start looking at gaps and overlaps and what was missing and who was going to be able to provide that. Now, Susan said the most important thing about this group is that they control the money. Everything that happens in our county, we found out has to go before the Community Alliance. And then it goes to the County Commissioners and the foundation people and they kind of prioritize and shift money

around to determine where the money should go to which agencies.

SUSAN MAGERS: And it also allows us to be -- to have an opportunity to know all the providers in our community, to share information on a monthly basis, to have some influence on how the human services funding is being allocated.

It also allows us to talk -- and this was huge for me -- about best practices in our field. We have people in the community -- when I met with the grants and aides staff and I looked at the 114 programs they were funding, it was amazing to me how many of those things that we were funding were certainly not what we consider best practice in our field.

And so I think that having this opportunity to share information and influence what is happening in the community is a huge benefit of all of us being at the table together.

And as a parent, what I walked away with is that you can really feel the spirit of cooperation among all the partners. We are,

certainly, in those tough economic times, and funding is missing in a lot of places where we see needs.

But just to know that all the people sitting there are working for the same effort, and to meet the needs of the people in our community. It's huge. It's inspiring, even when you see all of the barriers ahead of us to know that together we're willing to walk that path and hopefully make a difference in their lives.

AL FLORES: Hi. I'm Al Flores from Palm Beach County. I'm supposed to talk to you about the history and organization of our council in Palm Beach County. I wanted to plug one of my projects. That's our Transition Conference that's coming to Palm Beach County. It's March 1st. I brought a few fliers that I'll put out on the table. But the reason I did that is because my role at United Way of Palm Beach County came about through a collaborative between the school district of Palm Beach County and United Way of Palm Beach County. It's important as part of our

interagency agreements that has come about through a lot of the partnerships that have been built through the Transition Council.

Our council -- or Palm Beach County sent a team, PIT team to the 2005 summit, and from that meeting, we came away with three goals from the state plan. And I think all of you have the state plan in your handouts.

We selected three goals, and at that time, I thought three goals, you know, we can certainly do a lot more than that. That's kept us very busy, and it's been a lot more than we bargained for in addressing those three goals.

We also attended the 2006 summit. From that summit, we developed a lot of action steps and desired activities, a lot more than we expected. It was a really good meeting session. And for those counties that are new, take advantage of the technical support that you have here because it really starts to pay off. You think it's not building into anything and before you know it, you've got this big plan, which we

have in Palm Beach County, a strategic plan.

From that, our council meets monthly, our steering committee. We also have -- our full council is made up of 80 members. From that, we formed a steering committee because obviously 80 members to meet on a regular basis is a very large group.

The steering committee does meet every month for face to face. All the agencies, the school district, DDR and we're talking about transition issues every single month. So it's kind of hard to turn away from that, and that starts to build results in the community, things like the collaborative that United Way now has with the school district.

We had a meeting recently. I do have some handouts from that meeting that I'll leave on the table. It has our mission and some of our focus, our goals and vision for Palm Beach County. And we started working on some of those action steps -- I was going to tell you about the history. I didn't want to take too much of the

material away from Iris, who will talk about my STARS project, but that's kind of my baby. It's a transition conference. It's a full day, free conference, and we'll have information out there about it.

IRIS NEIL: I began in Palm Beach County last year. And I was handed this packet probably about that thick of the transition action plan for the transition council. And I met with Al, and we went over some of the things. There were four subgroups. We had an education, our curriculum committee. We had an employment committee. We had an agency committee and a business committee. And each committee was meeting separately. And the plans were just huge. They put me on the curriculum committee, and I was just overwhelmed. And I'm thinking, gosh, you know, there are so many tasks here to accomplish how can we do this. And I sat with the group, and we took the route of doing an action plan.

I had come from Lee County previously, and Jackie Turner has a wonderful way of working

with her transition council. She took the persons in her planning path and adapted that to develop a path for the committee and made a five-year plan. And so what we did is we replicated what she had done over there with the curriculum committee and developed a five-year plan of what we needed to do to accomplish the strategic goals and to accomplish those dreams and those subactions that the committee had wanted.

After we presented that to the steering council, each of the other subcommittees did the same thing. And we actually began working and seeing success toward the goals for the strategic plan.

Some of the positives that came out of this -- and these were all in the work prior to coming to Palm Beach County. I believe Elizabeth Jennings had been working with the school district on some of these projects. And one was the United Way collaborative with the school district for Al's position. And it's funded both with school district money and United Way money.

His position is to increase awareness of transitioning youth and to work on increasing employment for transitioning youth and increasing business awareness. It's a wonderful thing because he leads the transition council. It takes away the focus from the school district and everything being the school district's responsibility.

And that's probably one of the most wonderful things that I can -- you know, I keep saying that, but it is wonderful to have him and have United Way involved because it is a collaborative agency and community agency that works for everybody.

Another thing that came out of that and Genevieve is going to talk about it, is the Team Project. And it's a transition project with CILO. That was initiated again with Elizabeth and United Way with the school district to have the CILO transition counselors come in. And she's going to explain that project to us.

GENEVIEVE COUSMINER: Good afternoon.

I'm the Executive Director for the Coalition of Independent Options which is the Center for Independent Living in Palm Beach County. And one of our focuses has always been advocacy.

Prior to being the Executive Director, I was the Coordinator of Advocacy Services for about ten years. As an attorney and an advocate, I was always going to IEP team meetings along with my team of advocates. We were always very sensitive to what was wrong, what was missing, what the weak points were at these meetings. And we went to IEP meetings for all different age students, including transition age students.

And one of the weaknesses that we saw was that there were no community agencies showing up at the meetings, no transition agencies showing up. The students, most of them had no idea what they were going to do when they got out of school. Nobody had ever asked them what their goals were, what they wanted to be when they grew up. None of that. So that, along with some other things, missing in the whole transition process.

Since we were already going to these meetings, we thought that we might be more positive to approach this in a more organized fashion. So we put together a proposal called "The T.E.A.M. Project," which is transition, education, advocacy, and mentoring. We went to the United Way. We obtained funding from the United Way. This was back in 2004. And with the funding, we were able to hire two dedicated advocates, two transition advocacy specialists, and Al Flores was one of them.

He, along with another advocacy specialist and the rest of the advocates at CILO, were prepared to go to IEP meetings for transition students. And that first year, we didn't go to that many, because it took about a year for us to get the agreement together. The agreement was with the United Way with the Palm Beach County School District, and with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. And there were a lot of problems. We went back, I think, eight times, eight different revisions of the agreement.

There were a lot of problems because, if you can imagine, we were all approaching this from our perceptions and our past history filled with lots of mistrust, misperceptions. They knew that I had gone into IEP meetings. I had represented students in due process complaints against the school district. I had represented consumers in appeals with Voc Rehab so there were many hurdles to get over in order to come to an agreement where the school district would actually -- we wanted them to actually invite us to all the transition IEPs to make sure that there would be a transition service agency at the table, at the IEP meeting.

So over the first year, we had a lot of revisions. We finally came to some agreements. And one of those -- one -- we addressed some of the concerns by agreeing that if the school invites us to an IEP meeting, we agree not to represent that particular student in a due process complaint should they have an issue with the school district, but we would, you know, make sure

that they were referred out to somebody else so that if they needed somebody to represent them, they would have somebody. And the same with Voc Rehab.

So that made it safe for the school district and for Voc Rehab to invite us, to have us there. And the benefit for them is that they know that there is a transition agency attending the meeting, advocating for the student, and also following through to make sure the services are obtained in the end.

After the first year of trying to come to an agreement, we were off and running. Al and the other advocates went to 750 transition IEP meetings the first year. So then, the United Way said, well, that's wonderful, but what does it show, what have you accomplished? So it was a great learning experience.

So we realized that we could go to a million IEP meetings, but it didn't really prove anything and there was no documentation that services were obtained, that students were

actually linked with service agencies.

So the next year, we extended the program, and it was modified so that we would go to two middle school -- we would focus on two middle schools. One in a rural area and one in a -- in an urban area. And then we found out that there were problems dealing with middle school students, although I believe we should start transition planning at the very, very earliest ages, you know, prekindergarten, kindergarten.

There were problems dealing with middle school students because they are too young to refer to Voc Rehab. They are too young to preregister them to vote. Too young to refer over to Social Security Administration. So we found -- we felt it would be better if we were dealing with older students.

So this year, we now are working with the team project to focus on 100 students, high school seniors, and because we've narrowed down from 750 down to a hundred, now we're going to really focus on follow-through. So we're plotting

every step of the way.

Have they been linked to an outside agency like Social Security or Voc Rehab or transportation or recreation or day programs, whatever it is? Have they made an appointment to see whoever they need to see? Have they begun to receive services? If not, what are the barriers to receiving services. And we're going to be keeping track of all of this in a database. At the end of this school year, we'll be able to produce a lot of information and a lot of documentation to show exactly how the students have fared.

And also, the advocates are meeting with them prior to the meeting so that they can do planning, goal setting, find out what their dreams are, things that nobody has ever asked them before.

Another outcome, which has been positive, is that CILO created a handbook, a transition manual called "Getting a Life." It's a couple hundred pages long. And it covers every

aspect of life in the adult world, transportation, social security, medical benefits, housing, everything you can think of. And in the back of the manual, it has actual forms so that families and students don't need to run all over town trying to find the right form to refer themselves over to Voc Rehab or Social Security. Everything is right there.

And now we're producing it on a CD-ROM. And we give this free to every student whose meeting we go to. And for other agencies and other individuals, it's on sale for \$25.

So to sum up, the positive outcomes are: That the agencies know that an advocate will be at the meeting; they know that we're collaborating and communicating; we've eliminated any threats that may have been there before; and the students, of course, benefit because they will always have an advocate at their meeting. There will be follow-through.

we can help to cut through some of the confusion and the overwhelming nature of the

transition issues that are facing a lot of families. And, of course, we have the handbook for further information for students. Thank you.

MELINDA BOYNTON: Good afternoon. My name is Melinda Boynton. I am working with the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. And I was nominated to head up the agency subcommittee of one of the four subcommittees that Iris was talking about about two years ago, had been in the job for about a year, had been meeting, meeting, meeting. Our story is very similar to what happened with Sarasota. We have these big meetings. Everybody would attend, and everybody would drop off. Then everybody would attend. And we were spinning our wheels and was getting very frustrated.

I was fortunate enough that we were able to have Lisa come down and work with us as well from the Transition Center. And she really helped us get focused and helped our little subcommittee move forward. We did a resource mapping. We identified gaps that we saw in the Palm Beach

County area.

And just to back up a little bit, the community partners of the people who attend the meeting on a regular basis are the Palm Beach School Department, APD, DVR, DBS, the Hab Center, the Goodwill, The Arc, Children Medical Services, CILO, Palm Beach Community College, FAU, charter schools of which there are 50 of them or more, workforce Alliance, JARC, and now the United way, thanks to Al.

And so we would meet, but we all were coming at it from a different perspective. We were all coming at it with our own agenda. And each one of us needing to meet our own needs of what we wanted to get out of this. And also and most importantly, this was just like a subsection of our jobs and our regular responsibilities. So we were very fortunate and I feel so blessed that we have Al now who is really the lead, the chairperson, schedules the meetings and is keeping everybody going. Because without that, I think it would be falling apart again.

So anyway, but when we met with Lisa and we did the resource mapping and we met several times to get that process accomplished, we identified the gaps that we saw in the community. And then tried to figure out how we were going to solve those gaps. And we kind of prioritized some things that we thought that the agency subcommittee could actually be working on. And these are the things that we are working on.

We identified a web site for the families to be able to go to get every kind of information that they need on transition. The Palm Beach School Department is going to be the host of that. As the agency subcommittee, we're trying to help them gather the information from the agencies. Help them fill out the data information, provide it to Iris or to the people at the school department who are going to be putting up the web site. So we're disseminating and collecting all the agency information.

We are also developing, hopefully a standardized referral form. Because when I just

mentioned all those different agencies that are participating, we each have our own referral form and our own referral process. And we were thinking it would be lovely for a family to have one form fill out and that we could then disseminate that to the other people who would better serve their child or also serve their child. So we're looking at trying to just develop a standardized form.

And then most importantly what we're trying to do is develop a checklist for families to use from birth or from elementary school, middle school, and high school. And the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation has our own checklist that we provide for students, but we wanted to incorporate it so it would be health care services, Social Security -- I mean, all kinds of things that aren't just work-related kinds of issues that families really need to start preparing for, like you said, as early as possible.

So we've been working very hard this

past year, meeting a lot, getting a lot accomplished. And the positive outcomes are: That we all know each other a lot better; that we communicate very well with each other; we know who to turn to; we know who is responsible for what; we understand what everybody else's job duties are; we've clarified how we can work smarter and not harder. And what else? That we have Al. I can't say that enough. It's just so great to have one person that's responsible for keeping everything going and he does a wonderful job with that.

AL FLORES: Thank you. I kind of sped up on what I had to say because I had a little conference before this to make sure I didn't go over time, but I think I have some extra time, so here I go.

Speaking about collaboratives, I really need to thank Elizabeth Jennings now with the National Disability Institute on her work in Palm Beach County. She really spearheaded a lot of the development of collaborative agreements and

actually designing the whereases agreement portions and coming up with those agreements. And even in my role working hard to get those agreements.

And Lisa, I think your name has come up several times. Lisa Friedman-Chavez. Lisa has been great in keeping our council going. Sometimes I just want to give up, and she's energized and keeps our planning process going.

Of course, Tara, the Partners in Transition have really been a really big help in getting all this started and continues to support the counties. And if there are any new counties in here, definitely call on their technical support. We just recently had Tara on a conference call talking about some of the transportation issues in Palm Beach County and some of the things we can do to address that. Definitely use those guys. They are there for your help.

A very important person, as I talked about, my STARS conference coming up on

March 1st that Susan Priest, I'm not sure if I saw you in here, but this is really her brainchild. It's a full-day transition conference in Palm Beach County. It's free to students. And we have exhibitors, presenters, speakers. It's a tremendous conference. I don't think we have any web site information, but we have -- I'll leave information out there. And if you'd like, I'll forward you information about the conference and all the topics that we had for 2007, very successful conference. That's it.

IRIS NEIL: The last thing is this year we did add Project Connect. We applied and received that grant, and we're expanding our transition council to include all students with disabilities and focusing on developing, you know, the Project Connect focus groups and such for this year.

AL FLORES: We had also -- again, we've built so many partnerships and through the collaboratives, now we have legal binding collaboratives.

But we also have this ongoing face-to-face meetings that have really brought about a lot of change. We applied for the FDDC Grant to bring project search to Palm Beach County. We're not sure what the end result of that will be. But just a lot of things that agencies, school district, this involved the Goodwill Industries came together to put this together. DDR, CILO, a lot of collaboratives and a lot of partnerships taking place and talking to Dr. Fishbane from Broward County, that there is a lot of stuff going on in different counties that we really need to get together and talk.

Our counties are doing a lot of stuff that we're right across the border and just not meeting as often as we should. The summit is great to come and share and learn and exchange what other counties are doing. But here we are. We heard from Martin County and some of the great stuff they are doing with tri-county or helping -- helping people succeed from Martin County and some of their collaboratives that are taking place that

we really need to, guys get together and talk about what you're doing and sharing some of your experiences. Anything else?

SPEAKER: We have a few minutes, so if you have some questions, please come to the microphones there, the two aisles there. Some questions? Or comments? Or jokes. (Laughter)

AL FLORES: Do we have any new counties attending, counties that this is their first year attending?

SPEAKER: Lisa.

SPEAKER: I just had a comment for all the folks that are up there. And I know that only a small portion can fit up there, but I think that your teams are just outstanding. And you really have put in so much effort and time and dedication. And it's just such -- it gives you almost like warm fuzzies of how much you really have the passion for what you do. It's not just a job. And I know that you folks put a lot of time outside of the regular workweek in your transition teams as well.

I wanted to mention that, and I also thought it was a really comment that Al had made about teams learning from each other. And we all have things to share with each other. I think that that's really a great point to really try to be reaching out. And I know that some of the teams that I've seen as far as the presummit questionnaire had mentioned that one of the reasons they come here is for the networking and learning what these other teams have going on. So I think that everyone from what you've said today has also learned about some of the cool things that you are participating in and making happen in your counties.

AL FLORES: Thank you. Also I'm a parent. I have a daughter who is now 29 years old. Unbelievable. That happens. She's autistic. And I thank all those professionals and educators that are here and taking your time out to be here and help individuals with disabilities and make transition a better process in all counties in the State of Florida, because you

deserve certainly a big round of applause for all your efforts and everything you guys do. Thank you.

SPEAKER: I would like to thank --

(Applause)

We would like to thank our panel for coming here today and share with us on the things they have learned and succeeded to work with.

We're a few minutes ahead on our schedule. That's just too bad. You'll just have to deal with it. Again, I was asked to remind you, that we'll have a 15-minute break and then after that, we'll be going into our groups again, and we'll be wrapping up from there. So we'll see you back together in the morning.

*** CHARGE FOR THE DAY &
PIT LEADERSHIP TEAM RECOGNITION ***
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2007
9:00 A.M.

NILA BENITO: Good morning, everyone.
It's wonderful to see everyone so -- I'll use my
magic wand to have everyone listen. I have a
magic wand today. I didn't expect it.

I'm just here to say a quick good
morning to everyone, and we had a debriefing with
the facilitators and recorders last night, and
it's phenomenal to hear everything that you all
are doing and how hard you're working, and
remember, we have the content experts today.

I'm also here -- if there's any
questions or anything we can help you to do what
it is that you're trying to make happen in your
county. I thank you, again, as a mom and as
someone working in the field as an advocate for
your dedication and commitment to hang in there
today and to do work that really needs to be done.

A reminder is that we have a new content expert here today, Paula Kohler from NSTTAC, and your facilitator will share more information with you about her. She is a wealth of knowledge. Pretty much anything you want to know about transition, anything you want to know, Paula would be able to come into your team and share information with you about it.

If there are some teams that the content experts don't make it to your team today, by the end of the day, they are going to let us know, and they have said that they will do follow-up conference calls with any teams.

So that doesn't mean since you don't get to visit with them today that you won't have an opportunity at all. So that's definitely a possibility, so please keep that in mind as well. And I want to turn the program over to Lisa Friedman-Chavez from the Partners in Transition Technical Assistance Project and Chris Drummond, Florida Developmental Disabilities Council to do a very special presentation. Lisa, Chris.

LISA FRIEDMAN-CHAVEZ: Good morning, everybody. I'm so glad to see you guys all here again today. I wanted to start off by saying that it's just so wonderful to see everyone here and all the dedication and the time and effort and commitment that you folks are showing to your counties, to your teams, and to students with disabilities, to youth with disabilities.

All of you have, hopefully, I see them on the tables, a star. Not all of you have the magic wand, but Nila and I, we got one. Today is a magical day, and we're in the magic city. As you can see on your star, it says on the top:

*"Star light, star bright, first star I see
tonight, I wish I may, I wish I might have the
wish I wish tonight."*

What we would like you to do with this star today, it doesn't have to be right this second, but at some point before your first breakout session with your teams, we would like you to put your wish inside here. And this could be for your school. It could be for your

district, your county, for your family, but we'd like you to share your wish with your team when you meet again for the first planning session. Who knows, one of your team members may actually have the same wish that you do. And even better yet, it's possible that maybe your wish could actually come true today. Maybe someone on your team says, hey! I have those resources or I can make that happen. So we would really like you to fill that out and make sure that you share it with your team when you folks regroup. Okay?

As I said, I really am just so pleased that everyone is here today. And I wanted to kind of recognize each and every team that is here, whether you're new, we welcome you.

And just the fact that you are here is showing that you do have the dedication, that you want to learn, that you have this drive, the passion to make your county better, to have this interagency collaboration. But some of the teams we have, and you all have it in the back of your agenda, but I want to say a few words about the

teams.

We have Baker here. You are a new team with Partners in Transition. We wanted to welcome you. Thank you so much for being here. Bay, you are a returning team. We want to thank you for your dedication and your thoroughness. (Applause)

We have Bradford. You are also a new team for Partners in Transition. Thank you so much for being here, Bradford. (Applause)

I see some folks from Broward right there. Thank you so much for being here. You are a returning team, and you folks are so creative and hard working. Thank you so much. (Applause)

And Columbia, you are also a new team. Yea! Thank you for being here. (Applause)

And Duval County, you are a returning team, and we want to thank you for your perseverance. (Applause)

And Escambia, you are a new team as well. Thank you for your support and for being here today. (Applause)

And Flagler, I saw Kim right there. I

remember you from last year. You are a returning team. Thank you for your enthusiasm! (Applause)

And Lake, you are a new county, a new team with us, and thank you so much for being here today. And Lee, who I'm working with, you're a returning team. We want to thank you -- yeah, thank you for that, but for being proactive and also you're extreme task masters. Thank you.

Leon, Wakulla and Gadsden, also known as the big bend. I hear them somewhere! We want to thank you. Those are three counties that are working together, and we wanted to acknowledge your teamwork. So thank you for that.

Madison County, you are new with us this year. Thank you.

And we have Monroe County. I know I saw you somewhere. There you are. Thank you for your commitment and your dedication.

And we have Orange County, and we want to thank you so much for allowing us -- I see some hands -- for allowing us to be here and for your dedication as well.

Palm Beach County, fantastic collaborators. They are a returning team. Thank you. (Applause)

And Pinellas County, we wanted to thank you folks for your hard work. (Applause)

And Polk County, I saw Kathy there, they are discovering -- they are discovering new possibilities, and they are also a returning team. Thank you. (Applause)

And Sarasota, you heard from them yesterday. They are a returning team, and they are expanding their collaboration. (Applause)

And then we have four -- this year, we have so many new teams, and it was so cool to see on the roster. I know Nila was really excited, we're all so excited to see so many new teams going on board.

The last four are all new. We want to thank you so much for being here. That's Seminole County, Suwannee, Taylor, and Volusia. Thank you so much for being here today. We appreciate it. (Applause)

And the Partners in Transition Advisory Committee wanted to give two special awards. Hopefully they are in the audience. One of them is for Sarasota County. And that is for collaboration and planning of team organizing and strategic planning. So if Susan or Sarah or anyone from that team is in the audience, if you could come by and pick it up. (Applause)

This is a photo-op moment.

(Applause)

And we would also like to thank Walton County for their collaboration and planning of a new team and strategic planning. Is Walton here? Oh, they are not here. I guess we'll be mailing it.

SPEAKER: Walton County?

LISA FRIEDMAN-CHAVEZ: Are you from Walton County?

SPEAKER: I can deliver it. (Applause)

LISA FRIEDMAN-CHAVEZ: And just to give you a little -- I guess a heads up, I think checkout is at noon today. So make sure that

you're all checked out by that time. And there will be two content speakers in the morning. And then there will also be two planning sessions in the afternoon. So it's a full day. It's a wonderful day. Today is the day you get to work on your worksheets, so cool, and the strategic planning.

with that said, I'd like -- oh, and the last certificate is for Pasco County. And it is for outstanding implementation of effective practices. And that includes the discovery. They are not here. well, you can take it for them.
(Applause)

And with that, thank you all so much for being here. I want to introduce Phyllis Sloyer. She'll introduce our next -- I'm sorry. Sheila, she will be introducing the next speaker. Thank you so much. (Applause)

And don't forget your stars.

*** "HEALTH COUNTS!" ***

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2007

9:15 A.M.

SHEILA GRITZ: Good morning. I'm Sheila Gritz. I'm currently serving as the Program Specialist for Transition for the Florida Department of Education Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services.

And before I introduce our next speaker, I wanted to make you aware of a couple of things. Florida came together and proposed a grant that will help facilitate more family involvement in our state. I want to just make you aware of this. We received a notification letter that we've tentatively been approved, although we don't have a contract in hand, so it's not official yet. But what this grant is proposing to do is, it will pull together a state level steering committee of all major stakeholders that are focused on transition initiatives.

This group will meet periodically.

We're going to receive technical assistance and support from the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center, which is where Paula Kohler is from. And you've been told that Paula will be here as a content expert today. So we're delighted that she will be involved with that project. We'll also receive technical assistance and support from the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities.

The project will look at establishing a minimum of six focus groups. The focus groups will include students, parents, and guardians from around the state in diverse districts representative of both urban and our small rural districts.

We'll take a look at what's working and what's not regarding outcomes for indicators one, two, thirteen and fourteen, which are the transition indicators you heard Joyce mention yesterday, looking at graduation rates, at dropout rates, at what's happening with the transition IEP and transition services that students are

receiving in school as well as the students' post-school outcomes. And we'll hear directly from families, from caregivers, and from students how can we best get information to them to meet their needs.

we've heard this over and over. We heard yesterday mentioned, we need more information to families. Families aren't getting the information they need. So we hope that this will help us improve all of our outcomes in the area of transition for youth with disabilities.

I wanted to remind you again of the Youth Leadership Forum. If you have not in the past submitted, nominated a student from your area to attend the youth leadership forum, which is held in Tallahassee each summer, I strongly encourage you to do so. You can go online to The Able Trust. They have applications currently posted. I have attended it for a couple of years. It is a wonderful venue for our students. They grow so much in the matter of just a number of days learning the leadership skills, self-advocacy

skills, what they need to get into post-secondary education, and to get employed. So those were a couple of things we just wanted to share this morning.

I'm delighted to introduce to you our next speaker. Susan Redmon. Susan is with Children's Medical Services where she serves as a consultant. She's also a registered nurse. So she knows the health care transition issues from the professional perspective. As a parent of a child with significant disabilities and health care needs, she also knows it from the family level.

I hope Susan won't mind me sharing this, but when we had the first Partners in Transition Conference, which was held here in Orlando I believe at the Caribe Royale a number of years ago. This was prior to the first summit. It was a conference where folks came together.

And I remember being in a room at the end of the day with a number of stakeholders in transition and talking about issues and what was

important. At that time, you didn't hear a great deal about health care in transition, but you heard a lot about employment in transition. And a very passionate lady said to that group, what good is a job if you're dead? And it's funny, but it's not. And that touched so many of us so profoundly, because it is an issue. And it's an issue that needs to be in the forefront. And Susan Redmon is truly the champion for transition health care in our state. So, Susan, please come tell us about "Health Counts!" (Applause)

SUSAN REDMON: Good morning! For those of you who might be somewhat technologically challenged, you can sympathize. I am delighted to be here. I am really thrilled that health is on the agenda and that health is included in the teams. I assisted the PIT Summit planning committee getting representation from children's medical services around the state to be team members. And I have to admit, I don't know many of you by sight. So would the CMS staff who are here working on teams, please stand up and let us

put a face to you. Yea! Thank you. (Applause)

And while you're standing, what about the other people who are here representing mental and behavioral health, why don't you stand up, too, and people like John and Kathy and Debra who work in the health care. Come on, I want to see health here. (Applause)

Thank you for your time, energy and devotion.

Well, to get us started, I want to find something we have in common. I want to ask you to raise your hand if you've ever been sick, little bit sick, big sick. Okay. We've got that in common. And how many of you when you were sick maybe missed school or missed work. So you can see health counts, and that's why I came up with this.

If you need to contact me I'm available. Because of work and home, I kind of do this 24/7, but it's what I love doing, so that's not a big deal. I try to be a repository, so if there's information you need, I'd be happy to share that.

Margaret Mead was a social anthropologist who worked with different peoples around the world and lived in communities and didn't just study them with a magnifying glass. She really interacted with the people. And maybe you've heard another quote of hers about it just takes a small group of people to change the world. I can't remember the exact words, but I came across this, and I really love it. "Always remember that you are absolutely unique. Just like everyone else." So when you do these big plans for all the population we serve, we always have to remember, these are single individuals that we're working with, and they all have unique needs, even if they are all headed towards similar destinations.

I know that all of you have read your Partners in Transition Strategic Plan, front and back. You've got it memorized. You know just how you're going to tweak it to work in your communities. Well, on page 33 under 4.A, are mental and physical health services, and I believe

it refers to oral health, too. Maybe next year we'll have some of them represented.

And there are six goals in the strategies for health care that we hope you can take back to your community and find ways, and there are many issues and challenges with health care. I'll be the first to acknowledge that. But if you can find ways to incorporate health in the IEPs, in the 504 plans, in the daily lives of individuals to help enhance their lives and help them become more successful. So I hope you will actually open up the strategic plan. A lot of people worked hard on it, and the whole thing, I think, is just fabulous.

well, we talked about in the beginning, you raised your hands, you had some experience with being sick. If you have a chronic health problem or you have a disability that puts you at high risk for having health problems, then health can really be a big factor. And I love the presentations yesterday, and Anne's was very compelling. I mean, that's one determined woman

who has gone through repeated surgeries and always had her eye on the prize and had her goals in order and prioritized and had a lot of good support.

Good health supports everything that we do in life, really. Because in order to be a self-determined individual, in order to understand who we are, if we have a disability, what kind of environment we need to be successful. Does that include disability disclosure? How do we compose ourselves and present ourselves? which is really a challenge for students as they get older.

Students don't want to go into post-secondary settings or in work environments and have that old baggage. If they can reinvent themselves and forget about all that stuff, they are really tempted to. And I can appreciate that. So our job is to help them understand the value of knowing who they are, and helping them feel comfortable, finding their dreams and working toward them.

So all of these components of

self-determination, inclusion in the community and in the activities they want to participate in, having the choice for different options in life and taking control of their lives, being a good self-advocate. Like Anne was saying, to know who you are and be able to talk with politicians, to vote, to do planning. And if you are healthy and you can look ahead and you feel good about your chances of being successful, then you're probably going to be more successful, and then you're going to have good outcomes in post-secondary and/or work outcomes.

Now, I could stand up here and blather at you all morning, and, certainly, there's a lot to talk about with health care. But I think the most compelling thing that I can do to share with you is to share a video called "This is Health Care Transition." And this video was put together under contract by John Rice and his wonderful staff at the Institute for Child Health Policy at the University of Florida. And it features young adults who talk about their challenges and their

ideas for health care transition.

Each of the state teams got a copy. I wish I had deep pockets and could I give everyone here a copy. But you're welcome to make copies, and I hope you will give credit to John and his staff. And John also brought a little brochure about the materials they make and the web site, and he put those out on the resource table. He just put those out this morning. So, please, stop by.

In addition, in your notebook, you have besides the PowerPoint, a copy of what our web site looks like with all the resources. You don't have to be a CMS enrollee or family of a CMS enrollee to benefit from the information. It's for anybody who can use it. And you can print it off.

I have to admit that it looks a lot spiffier in the published versions. John and his staff have come out with this new one, "You're Not a Kid Anymore," since you're not a kid anymore, and it's for middle school students, because I

don't know about you, but we're finding there's a lot to learn about when you're going through transition. So you're not going to be successful if you wait until you're 16 or 18 and then think, oh, I'm going to do that this week. (Laughter)

So without -- I hope there will be time after this. We're going to skip a little bit of the beginning of the video and just go right to the students talking. And then I hope there will be time for questions and comments. And I have lots of resources in the PowerPoint presentation. And I hope you'll look at those. They are not in any special order, but I did put CMS first.

(Laughter)

If you could go ahead and start the DVD, please. Thank you.

[Video shown]

(Applause)

SUSAN REDMON: Thank you again. I've seen this 10, 12 times and I just love watching these students. And I have to tell you, there are individuals like my son who does not have the

cognitive skills, the language or even the desire, I think, to be able to complete any aspect of health care transition. So I know that this information doesn't apply 100% to everybody.

And I also want to talk a little bit about the issues and challenges, because there are thousands of Americans who don't have disabilities or chronic health conditions who don't have health insurance. And it gets to be a huge issue. And without trying to be funny, I tell people, well, consider working for the state or federal government, because they have benefits. And also, helping the students understand the benefit of putting money aside toward those kinds of options. Because when you're young, you're a risk taker and you're immortal and you live forever. So that might not be interesting. I mean, health care is definitely not a sexy kind of conversation. So I can see all the issues and challenges.

Personally, I believe that because health is included in all these transition activities, now that everyone is starting to have

a better understanding, people in education, people who are in advocacy and Voc Rehab and other aspects of employment, when you see all the issues and challenges of health care transition, then you, too, can become a spokesperson for this issue.

And when you feel up to getting in touch with a legislator or someone who is running for office, now you can be more articulate. Educators can include some of these communication skills in a 504 or IEP plan. Lots of ways of working it in. And so I firmly believe we need to work together. Nationally, the Maternal and Child Health Bureau believes we need to look at transition. In 2000, when they put together their six goals for children and youth with special health care needs, the sixth one states that these youth will have a successful transition to health, adult life, and independence. So they are getting away from the medical model.

They understand that people are more than a diagnosis or a disease process, and at

Children's Medical Services, we've adapted those six goals. And we, too, want to work on transition with all the community partners, the other agencies, the organizations with families and students. So that's why I get so excited about transition.

It's a huge challenge for no matter what field you're in. And I feel like we're making a lot of progress. So, you know, I don't like life to be boring, so if it was all figured out, then maybe I wouldn't be so passionate about it.

The resources, like I say, at Children's Medical Services, you're welcome to print out any of the resources and use them and share them. The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council has some great resources. Their booklet called Planning Ahead has a lot of great transition information. If you're interested in guardianship advocacy or some part of guardianship, they include that.

Healthy and Ready to Work is a national resource center, and they have a wealth of

information, and they include health with the final outcomes to be successful. You have to have one to proceed with the other.

Bright Futures has -- well, in health care we call anticipatory guidance, so they have things developmentally, lessons and things for families and students to learn about as they get older that are appropriate to age groups. And you can always take what's appropriate for a younger age group if a student is not cognitively able to understand their age appropriate information and it might be appropriate.

FYI Transition is a Florida site with some great information. I hope everyone here is familiar with the ADA. And Anne was exactly right. There's real potential for it to crumble and go away unless people like us keep it in the forefront.

The PACER Center up in Wisconsin -- Minnesota. I knew it was one of those cold places. They have some great resources. They do a lot of wonderful transition activities. Of

course, the Institute for Child Health Policy, ICHP at UF, John and his crew are very knowledgeable and have done wonderful things.

The Transition Center at the University of Florida is really a wonderful resource, and they sponsor all kinds of great activities, Project Connect, et cetera. "Planning Ahead" I referred to.

The National Collaborative on workforce and Disability has come out with "The 411 on Disability Disclosure: A workbook for Youth with Disabilities." This is free. You can either print it off the web site, and I think they still have copies. They can send them to you. Great activities for students to use to look at other individuals who are going through disability disclosure, opportunities, and, you know, how should they handle it. So they aren't talking about their own personal disclosure or their own personal health care issues. They are looking at these scenarios and helping in groups and individually. So if you can work that in the

curriculum, it's a wonderful resource. Curtis Richards, their group had come up with that.

Sites that I think are more interesting for students would include Youthhood, Florida Center for Inclusive Communities that Nila referred to at USF. Social Security. I have to say they've gotten a little friendlier. If you're interested in things like the PASS Plan for students, to help them save to accomplish their goals and dreams, certainly you're going to want to get in touch with Social Security and VR and a lot of transition specialists at schools are knowledgeable about PASS Plans.

National Youth Leadership Network, the YLF is a great Florida opportunity, and then there's a National Youth Leadership Network.

Girls health, specific to young women who want to know more about maintaining their health. And then Kids as Self Advocates, KASA, is an offshoot of the Family Voices, which is a National Grassroots Advocacy Organization.

So lots and lots of resources. Don't

want to overwhelm you, but if there's any way I can help or any of the CMS staff -- some of the teams don't have CMS representation this year, and we hope to resolve that for next year -- but I am always available. So if there are any questions, please go to the microphones, because I won't be able to hear you otherwise. Thank you.

(Applause)

I guess, there are no questions -- or is there a question? Okay.

*** THE ABC'S OF BEING MONEY SMART - FINANCIAL
LITERACY FOR YOUTH IN TRANSITION ***

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2007

10:00 A.M.

SUSAN REDMON: It's my pleasure to now introduce Elizabeth Jennings. Elizabeth is on the staff at the Law, Health Policy & Disability Center at the University of Iowa College of Law. She's also on the staff at the National Disability Institute. Her experience is quite varied.

It includes creating collaborative agreements, building partnerships, and executing grant allocations with the United Way of Palm Beach County, assisting individuals and understanding the effects of work on Social Security, Medicaid, and Medicare benefits with Gulfstream Goodwill's Benefits Planning, Assistance and Outreach Program. You definitely need to stay for this. Training individuals with disabilities on employability skills, assisting individuals in obtaining employment and working

with youth in a behavioral treatment setting.

Currently, Elizabeth works on asset building strategies for individuals with disabilities throughout the State of Florida, and she provides training on the impact of work on Social Security benefits under Florida's Medicaid Infrastructure Grant, and provides technical assistance to states who have been awarded grants under the Department of Labor's, Disability Program Navigator Initiative. So without further ado.

ELIZABETH JENNINGS: I sound busy, don't I? Good morning, everyone. I want to start off by giving special thanks to the other two presenters. Iris Neil with the School District of Palm Beach County and Tom Stokes of FDIC who came from Atlanta to be with us this morning.

Also, thank you to the Partners in Transition Planning Committee. I sat on a lot of conference calls to get to be here today. I really am appreciative that they are allowing us to speak. And thanks to the Florida Developmental

Disabilities Council because it's their funding that has allowed me to work on asset development over this past year.

Please pause for technical assistance.

Today we're going to talk to you a little bit about Money Smart and Financial Literacy for Youth in Transition. And you may be wondering why this conversation is coming up. And one of the reasons is because it's really vital when we talk to youth about transitioning to adult life that they start to feel connected to their money, whether their money is coming from the Social Security Administration, from family money, from earned income. If the students are not connected to their finances, they are going to end up living within a life of poverty, as many people in public benefits do.

There are some other reasons, too. For one -- I'm getting a little blocked there, huh?

For one, it's part of the ADA. This is what it actually says in the act. If you see that last part talks about economic self-sufficiency

for individuals with disabilities. It's right there in our law.

As Anne mentioned yesterday, it's the foundation for everything we do. If you want to look at it more closely, it talks about -- we don't want there to be continued existence of unfair and unnecessary discrimination. And that this unfair and unnecessary discrimination costs our country billions of dollars. The worst part is it forces people to remain dependent and nonproductive.

So we kind of start off right away with kind of a systems change argument. As many of have you discussed in your smaller groups, it's really hard to talk to students who are transitioning and in need of public benefits, like Social Security and Medicaid. It's hard to talk to them about earning money when you're fearful that they are going to lose their benefits. Right? would we all agree with that? It's very challenging. But I wish that that was what we really had to worry about, because that's really a

myth. It's really a myth that you're not allowed to earn money and that you're not allowed to save money. And I would rather be coming out to different communities to talk about what to do with all the money students have saved than to actually have to go out and convince people to allow folks to work. That would be a much better job, wouldn't it? I would love that job.

It's also in our strategic plan for Partners in Transition. In two different areas, we talked about making sure that students who are transitioning have access to understanding their money, that they'll make informed choices. So it's really important to start this in school.

Once they graduate and they are out of your hands, getting them financial literacy is going to be more difficult. It's going to mean participating with adult programs and making sure that they have access to it. Whereas when you work on this with the school districts, it's already a part of the school district's purpose to teach people functional math skills which can

include financial literacy.

This is the most important reason why we're here today. Because we know when people depend on public benefits, they live a life of poverty. There's just no way around it. We know it. It's a proven fact. The number of people living in poverty is higher when a disability is involved. So we want to make sure that we're providing students with knowledge about all of the opportunities that are available to them to build assets, which we're going to talk about a little bit toward the end. Individual Development Accounts, PASS plans, pooled trust, these are all things that allow a student to save above the \$2,000 mark that everybody worries about and still maintain public benefits.

But if we don't start off with financial literacy, the students are not going to know how to budget, and they are not going to know how to save and they are not going to be able to participate in those programs.

So I'm going to let Thomas Stokes take

it away and talk to you about the curriculum that we're suggesting, which is FDIC's "Money Start."

(Applause)

TOM STOKES: I think most of you know that FDIC is an organization that was created to protect our money. Basically, if you put money in a bank account, you want to know that it's there. But we also have a mission to try to make sure that individuals are having an opportunity to get the information that they need to be informed consumers. That applies to everyone.

So what we devised was a program called Money Smart, which is a personal financial education program. And I guess I should say at the offset, it's free.

It is set up in an instructor-led format of ten topics. There is also a self-directed version, a computer-based version that we also have that has virtual instructors in English and in Spanish that could also be utilized as an auxiliary with this. Each of the modules has a comprehensive guide for the students. It has one

for the instructors as well. And when we say it's a guide, the lesson plan is already scripted. The instructor guide has everything that's necessary for you to actually conduct the class. It is set up so it tells you this is 45 minutes, 60 minutes, whatever the length is, what resources you need to have. It explains what the interactive exercises are and the materials are included as well.

So everything is on a CD, and it's all downloadable, photocopy ready, and it includes your PowerPoints as well.

There's a booklet that's available to print out so that the students have that. So if students want to take that home after class, they have something to reinforce it.

So what is in it? We have basic information on various number of topics. It has basic banking information so that individuals can understand what the differences are between a bank, credit union, a thrift. It explains what individuals actually do within the bank so they know the difference between a teller, an officer,

a branch manager.

It has a borrowing basics which essential is to talk about credit, because individuals need to understand that this is a credit economy. It's not a cash-based economy. And so that's very important for individuals to understand that.

We have one that's on basic checking that goes into reconciliation, talks about what the use of the statements are, tries to get individuals to be responsible for managing that type of account.

"Money Matters" is a budget module. So we have budget tools in there anywhere from keeping a diary of your costs and expenses to calendars to set up for your bills. So it has various tools that are handy for individuals to use to try to manage their money so their money works for them rather than against them.

"Pay Yourself First" is to try to get the savings instinct built up early so that individuals are at least saving maybe a dollar,

five dollars, whatever that makes practical application sense for them in terms of their budget.

"Keep It Safe" is the consumer protection module. So we do have something that gives an overview of what the individual's rights are.

"To Your Credit" talks about the use of credit. It explains about credit history, credit scoring, how to improve your credit if you've actually created some issues that are on your credit issue, and it goes into that in depth.

We talk about credit repair scams as well so that individuals can be on the outlook for those type of things.

"Charge It right" obviously if they are bombarded with credit card solicitations, we want individuals to at least understand how to properly manage and use a credit card.

"Loan To Own." There are so many rent to own out in the marketplace. We want individuals to understand what a basic installment

loan is and the option that they have to acquire things by that method rather than to do rent to own.

"Your Own Home." This can't be used for an individual to use for their pre-counseling to actually get into a home, but it's an excellent precursor to give those individuals an opportunity to understand the difference between rental and homeownership so they can make the choice whether or not that's something they want to enter into.

what do we think the benefits are?

well, we've actually done a study with Gallup where we followed some graduates after they had taken the course some 12 to 18 months later.

Behavioral change is a significant piece of that. Obviously, knowledge gain is great, but once individuals actually get into budgeting or savings or where they had previously not done so to make that change is very important. And we think that reaching out to youth and doing this is a very significant piece to reach individuals early on in life to do that. We also want them to

be responsible and make the choices that they need to do as taxpayers.

One of the things that we work with quite a bit around the country is we work with the IRS and their volunteer income tax programs, trying to make sure that individuals are taking advantage of the free services that are available, and also to look at the tax credits that they may be entitled to. There are a number of tax credits that annually are not applied for by those who are eligible.

We also want to be able to improve the basic understanding of students of finances. They should have some basic concepts that are under their control and responsibility when they graduate from school. And we think it's very important to have this in the classroom. And the necessary implications that I mentioned earlier with credit and understanding the difference between utilizing cash in the economy.

We believe that it has the asset-building and wealth-building capacity for

individuals to begin that savings mechanism and to actually begin to look at how they can, over time, invest their money into their future. And obviously, for FDIC, we want to see that those who are previously unbanked -- and there are millions of individuals who don't have a basic banking account in this country -- we want to reach out to them and make them part of the mainstream economy.

we also have made this available as our contribution, if you will, to the marketplace. we don't charge anything for shipping it. we don't charge anything for the materials. we make it available per instructor. so if you have, like, ten instructors that want to utilize this, we give out ten copies of it.

And now I'm going to turn it over to Iris to talk about the project that they are doing in west Palm. (Applause)

IRIS NEIL: When Elizabeth started with the National Disability Institute, she approached me with the idea of doing a project on asset building and working with the students and

developing the skills.

We met with the Jump\$tart Coordinator for our area, Jessica, and I can't pronounce her last name. It's Cecere. She came in, and she brought us all this information, and she's a real fast talker. So she gave us the web site, and she said, Iris, you go and you look at all the information you have. And this was right after we had our STARS Conference in May. So I had a little bit of time, and I was a little bit relieved of all my conference duties. And I went to the web site, and I had a couple of teachers selected to work on this project.

The jumpstart.org has a wonderful selection of menu of activities. Jessica didn't mention Money Smart at this point. It was a self-discovery type of thing. I went through and listed all these different web sites and links that I thought were really good. And I did it as a Chinese menu. And I sent this out to the people that were working with me on the project. And I had a couple of stars next to the Money Smart

program because I thought this was really good.

Now, backing up a little bit, on the jumpstart.org program, it's fljumpstart.org, when -- it has separate sections.

One is for purchasing materials that teach financial literacy, and one is for free materials. Well, being a school district employee, I go to the free stuff. And it correlates everything to the grade level. So it has the activity and then it goes K-3, 6-12, whatever it is and the level of functioning and what gets you the objective and everything.

So it's very nice to see the different activities. And then you can go to the web site and look at the materials to see if it's something that's appropriate. And that's how we got hooked with the Money Smart, by looking at their materials and going to the FDIC web site.

We began the program during the summer session at one of our off-campus classrooms for the 18- to 22-year-olds that are in a job training program. We thought that this was best because we

knew these kids needed some intensive training. we did six weeks in the summer school program, and the teacher was just so thrilled with it.

we got through, I believe, the basic banking -- what else did we go through? why do we use a bank? And at the end -- yes, we did prioritize our issues. we looked at safety, you know, keeping your credit history. Because you know what happens with students with disabilities, you're giving out your social everywhere you go. And keeping that private and keeping it personal is really important and knowing that, you know, you just don't write it down and give it to anybody. So we had a priority there.

we also knew that some of the kids wanted credit cards. what they thought were credit cards weren't really credit cards. They would go to walgreen's and they would purchase a visa cash card and they thought that was credit. we had students that had never gone to a bank before. They kept their money in their house in a can. And that was very scary. And it took a long

time for that one student to get to the point where, oh, wow, if I go to the bank, then the bank is going to keep my money, and I don't have to worry about somebody breaking in my house and stealing the money. Because if they steal it from the bank, it's still there.

when we brought Elizabeth and Jessica back in to meet with us and kind of meet with the students, they were just amazed. They were thrilled at how much the students had learned. And it was just one of those opportunities where the students were answering questions and asking -- they were asking the questions about the program.

we're currently using it in our off-campus classrooms right now for the 18- to 22-year-old students that are moderately -- have moderate disabilities. And those classes, we have -- two of the classes are doing direct instruction, and one class is doing the direct instruction and the web based or not the web-based program but the CD program, so that they can

emphasize that.

We met with the curriculum committee for the Exceptional Ed Department this past week, and it was kind of funny, because they gave out the Sunshine State Standards format that has the new access points. And Elizabeth is going to take that back to Jump\$tart, and they are going to be correlating Money Smart to the Sunshine State Standards. It's so easy.

You know, teachers want something that they can say to their administrators, I'm teaching what I need to be teaching for the test or actually for the Sunshine State Standards. And I'm teaching something that the kids need to know. And it's easily presented. They don't have to think about what they're doing. They don't have to collect material. It's all there.

We'll be expanding our project to four additional schools for the rest of this year, and then next year, we hope to be able to go into the other 27 high schools that we have in our district.

And we just lost power. That's pretty much our project. We're really thrilled with Money Start. It's a good program. And I encourage you to take a look at it. One thing, too, about the FDIC web site, once you get on to their listserv, they'll send you e-mails. They do have on their newsletter -- they do have a 45-minute training video for teachers. And it's easy to use that you could hook it up with your Internet server and have the teachers just train when they needed to be trained. And I just discovered that last week when that newsletter went out. (Applause)

TOM STOKES: I just wanted to also state that we provide technical assistance in getting the program up and running. So if you actually want us to come out and do a train the trainer session, we can do that as well.

As was mentioned, we do have on the web site a DVD format that you can actually obtain. That also is free of charge. Where we actually show what we do with the train a trainer. If you

actually want that one-on-one sort of approach, we can come out and do that and be available to you as well. So our technical assistance is also free. We don't charge anything for that.

ELIZABETH JENNINGS: So before we go to questions, I know some of you probably have some lingering questions about whether or not it's safe to teach students with disabilities to save money. So I wanted to make sure you knew about a couple of things.

The first is that there are a few work incentives built into social security disability benefits that allow a person to save money to reach specifically an employment goal. So even though there are limits, especially under SSI and for our students who receive the Medicaid waiver to keep their assets not over \$2,000, there are some special work incentives that allow a person to do that.

The second is, in many communities in our state there's what's called Individual Development Account and an Individual Development

Account is a matched savings account. So an individual can save towards homeownership, further education, or starting a business. And the money in an IDA account does not count against any public benefit. So I can keep that money separate, and it won't count as an asset for me.

The third is that there's something called a Pooled Trust. I know we hear a lot about special needs trust, but that's usually where it's left. There's a specific special needs trust called a Pooled Trust. A Pooled Trust allows a person to put their own money into a trust. Their earnings, money that they've saved, money that they've acquired can go into their Pooled Trust, and that money will not count against their public benefits.

So even though there is that \$2,000 asset limit, I want to make sure people know that there are opportunities to save beyond that mark. That should not be the deterrent to people saving money. Let's find out about the other programs. You have my e-mail in the back of your PowerPoint,

the last page. You have Thomas' e-mail and you have Iris' e-mail. We're happy to take questions now, but if you have questions beyond today, please feel free to contact us. Thank you so much for staying and listening to us this morning.

(Applause)

Any questions?

SPEAKER: Can you talk a little bit about how benefit planning works for individuals and how they access that service?

ELIZABETH JENNINGS: Sure. In your PowerPoint -- we're out of power now, but we gave you a lot of information in that PowerPoint, which is in your binder. And one of the pages is about the WIPAS, Work Incentive Planning and Assistance. It used to be called Benefit Planning Assistance and Outreach, the BPAOs, which they then went by the name Benefit Planners. But now they are WIPAS, Work Incentive Planning and Assistance. Those are projects funded by the Social Security Administration to provide free benefit planning to individuals with disabilities who want to go to

work, but need to understand how their benefits will be impacted by their earned income.

So you can schedule to meet with a WIPA. It's free. They hold what is called "wise meetings" or "wise seminars." And those are seminars where people can go and just get general information if they are not sure that they want to work. But once they are ready to work, they should meet with a WIPA -- with a WIPA Project. It's a free meeting, and they'll provide the person information.

They'll also touch upon their Medicaid, their Medicaid waiver, a little bit about food stamps, and then some about housing. So the WIPAs are a great resource. If you haven't connected with them yet and you're a school district, they would love to come into your school district. Transition age youth is a big target for the Social Security Administration and you'll be doing their project, making them look really good if they can meet with a bunch of your students. They'll be very excited.

You reach them by going into the PowerPoint, and there's a slide on the WIPAs, or you can go to ssa.gov and type in search WIPA. Any other questions?

SPEAKER: I have a question about the money -- [INAUDIBLE].

TOM STOKES: The instructor-led version is only available to educators, but the other version that we have, the web-based and the self-directed computer based CD is available to individuals, so anybody can order the other one.

The web-based and the computer-based self-directed version on a CD has virtual instructors that are already wedded into the course curriculum. It's both in English and in Spanish. It has a testing element that's already set up in it. So that one is available to anyone. So we have the two versions that are out there that you can utilize. And you can access the computer base directly from our web site, if you wanted to do that, and we allow individuals to link -- not individuals, but schools and

organizations to link to that.

And I also wanted to mention, there is a handout on the table outside that makes the basic case for Money Smart and how it reaches the standards. It's not the comprehensive one that's going to be done with Jump\$tart and NDI, but it does make that basic case on how it meets the standards.

SPEAKER: [Not at microphone]

ELIZABETH JENNINGS: Depending on the area of Florida, in some areas, there are certainly Individual Development Accounts available. What we're finding is that not a lot of people with disabilities are utilizing them. It may be fear of loss of benefits. It may be -- in a lot of areas, they felt that the housing market still was not at a point where it was really affordable for people. But we've been working with IDA providers in Palm Beach County, in Dade County, in Jacksonville County, and with the providers that are starting in IDA in the Tampa Bay area. And they are ready. They are

ready to serve people with disabilities. They just need folks to come forward and say that they want to participate. For the IDA you need to be 18.

SPEAKER: I just wanted to thank everyone on the panel for talking about a subject that I think is probably one of the most important and overlooked subjects that I've seen in a long time in transition. I know that right now, the largest number of bankruptcies in our country, not just in Florida, are young adults, especially college students, because they don't understand credit. But even more critical than that, in a climate going forward where we don't have pensions anymore is the savings programs.

I've been upset about that \$2,000 limit. I've spoken publicly about that many times, been very upset about it. But I am excited that you talk about Pooled Trusts. And there are some brochures out there on the desk out front that I encourage people to look at, too, because I think Pooled Trusts are -- of those three, I think

that's probably one of the most important things going forward in a young person's life. So I encourage everybody to look at those. Thank you very much.

ELIZABETH JENNINGS: I agree. And I'll tell you a little story. We have Tom Nurse here, who has been doing a lot of financial planning with folks with disabilities. And I'll relay one quick story that he told me. He told me of an adult man who's starting out in the work world, and he's starting to make pretty decent cash. So he participates in the Pooled Trust, and he bought his mom life insurance. So every month, he pays his mom's life insurance deductible, and when she passes, those funds will go into his Pooled Trust. So he's really building a nice nest egg for himself within that Pooled Trust. It won't count against any of his public benefits and he'll be able to use the money for anything that his public benefit does not pay for.

SPEAKER: Hi. I worked with IDA with United Way in Palm Beach County. I understand

what you're saying, but I want you to know there are five units of IDAs in the State of Florida.

I tried to get the IDAs in the State of Florida to work with individual other counties than where they were. This is not an easy thing to do, and I need to talk to somebody. I was with United Way yesterday. And we need to work on this in the State of Florida because inasmuch as you're coming from Palm Beach County -- and I know how active we are over there because I was there for years. But outside of Palm Beach County, on the east side of the coast, you don't have them, and it is very difficult to get somebody to match that extra two dollars.

And even here, I went to United Way and tried to get them to start it here knowing the people there and to get them to, you know, combine, and I couldn't get it done. So this is not easy, and somebody needs to help me out. I'm Elizabeth. I'm with Heart of Florida Solutions for You, and I need your help.

ELIZABETH JENNINGS: I'll be happy to

talk with you afterwards.

SPEAKER: Elizabeth, it was mentioned that you have student brochures, and can those be obtained through the counties? And can, also, individuals themselves get a hold of that?

ELIZABETH JENNINGS: I don't think we had any student brochures.

SPEAKER: [Not at microphone]

SPEAKER: It was mentioned that there was a student brochure.

TOM STOKES: For the Money Smart piece?

SPEAKER: Yes. More specifically, yes, sorry. We covered a few things there.

TOM STOKES: Each of the modules of Money Smart is set up with an instructor section with a student section, with your PowerPoints. And then also, actually, it has a self-promotional piece in there. Say, like, if you wanted to advertise that you're conducting the class. So each of those topics that I mentioned has that in it. So there is a student take-home. It's not a brochure, but a student take-home portion that

they have to reinforce what you taught them in the classroom.

SPEAKER: I gotcha. Thank you very much.

ELIZABETH JENNINGS: I think there was just one more question and then I think we're over time.

SPEAKER: Thank you. I'm Diane Whitfield from north Florida, Taylor County. I've been in the area of human services since 1973, and this is -- I keep abreast of various activities. This is the first time I've ever heard of the -- was it IDA? Yes. I go to every training. I'm knowledgeable, and I did Medicaid billing for a number of years. I keep up with SSI, SSA, I have all the trainings that everybody offers. This is the first time I've ever heard of it. And, of course, I'll get into it and explore it. It's not your job to spoon-feed me, but it is somebody's job to tell everybody this stuff. So I assure you if it isn't being used, I'm presenting you with one very real reason.

The other thing is about your Money Matters Program, I watched and every adult in this room when you were talking had their head down. It's not just the youth. Our country is in the shape it's in because of us in this room. So everyone in the room was thinking and looking, oh, my gosh, my credit card, my mortgage, what have I done? So this is timely. I wonder, is our government paying for this? Is this a government sponsored effort?

SPEAKER: The FDIC is created by congress. It isn't a taxpayer agency.

SPEAKER: I hope my tax dollars are funding it. This is a much better use.

TOM STOKES: [Not at microphone]

ELIZABETH JENNINGS: The last thing I wanted to tell you, if you want more information on asset building, because our funding came from the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, you can go to fddc.org.

On the front page it says "Asset Development Project," and there's a write-up about

everything we've talked about, IDAs, using work incentives to build assets, Money Smart, and even about tax credits with tax season coming up. So I really encourage you to check out the web site. Thanks again to FDDC for the funding. (Applause)

NILA BENITO: And just 60 seconds, I want to thank all of you up here for sharing. Obviously, it sparked a lot of interest, and that's fantastic.

Just to let you know, the rest of the day -- you have a 15-minute break right now, then please go to your leadership team planning sessions, and then you will pick up lunch. It will be a working lunch on the mezzanine. Then there's another team planning session. Thank you all so much for coming.

SPEAKER: Can I just add one resource for everyone? In each of the One-Stop Centers nationwide, there's a lot of these resources that are available and a lot of program information that's available through the One-Stops, but several of the One-Stops have what are called

Disability Program Navigators, and we have a lot of this information and resource information for you. So find your local One-Stop.

[Recess]