



Institute On Disability To Offer Summer Workshop On Autism

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July 10, 2007

Durham, N.H. – The Institute on Disability (IOD) at the University of New Hampshire will be presenting the ninth annual Autism Summer Institute August 13 -16 on the UNH campus in Durham. This year's four-day Institute, "Raising Expectations: Presuming Competence," is open to anyone interested in learning more about Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) from experts on the subject including persons living with ASD. Topics will include strategies to help support the full participation of students in general education classrooms as well as exploring ways individuals with ASD can improve the quality and independence of their everyday lives.

This year's Autism Summer Institute includes keynote presenters alongside some of the IOD's most knowledgeable staff members. Expert keynote presentations will be offered by Ros Blackburn, a lecturer from England living with autism; Jamie Burke, a Syracuse University student with autism and advocate for Facilitated Communication; CarolAnn Edscorn, a New Hampshire mother with Asperger Syndrome; and Donna Williams, celebrated international public speaker, author, and autism consultant from Australia.

The Institute is based on the principle that autism is a natural part of the human experience. Each presentation at the Institute will acknowledge that people with Autism Spectrum Disorders can and do lead satisfying lives in their communities at the same time that they experience challenges with communication, learning, social relationships, everyday tasks, and society's judgment that they are not competent. "I've experienced abuse based on the presumption that 'nobody was home,'" says Donna Williams, "that I 'couldn't feel pain,' 'couldn't feel loss,' 'didn't understand,' 'couldn't tell,' and that basically I was seen as a liability, a burden, something awaiting institutionalization, often an 'it,' not a person."

The presenters at the Autism Summer Institute will present an honest and hopeful view of living with autism. "Some people never learn how to ride a bicycle. Some people never learn how to swim. Some people never learn how to drive a car. Yet, these people may be 'neurotypical' in all other definitions," says CarolAnn Edscorn. "There are different competencies by which we judge the human person. But in talking about competency as a human being, we need to continue the shift in our dialoguing toward respect and understanding. Just because a skill may be missing or less than perfect doesn't mean the person is less competent."

In addition to the keynote presentations, participants will benefit from frequent opportunities to interact and discuss strategies in smaller, more informal workgroup settings.

The goal of the Autism Summer Institute is to provide perspectives which focus on students'

strengths in order to improve the quality of education in inclusive settings. Participants will gain skills and knowledge that will help support the full participation of students with ASD in their schools and communities.

The fee to attend the four-day Autism Summer Institute is \$399 per person. The fee to attend keynote presentations is \$60 each. Discounts for full-time students, individuals with ASD and their families are also available. For more information or to register online, visit www.iod.unh.edu or call (603)228-2084.

The Institute on Disability at the University of New Hampshire was established in 1987 to provide a coherent university-based focus for the improvement of knowledge, policies, and practices related to the lives of persons with disabilities and their families. Its mission is to advance policies and systems changes, promising practices, education, and research that strengthen communities to ensure full access, equal opportunities, and participation for all persons.

