

## THE INDEPENDENCE

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

|                           |     |
|---------------------------|-----|
| <i>Mark Your Calendar</i> | 1   |
| <i>Employment First</i>   | 1   |
| <i>Did you Know</i>       | 2   |
| <i>Regional Meeting</i>   | 2   |
| <i>Featured Speakers</i>  | 2-3 |
| <i>National APSE</i>      | 4   |

### Rosa's Law Signed by President Obama on Tuesday, October 5th, 2010

Soon many Federal statutes will no longer refer to "mental retardation" or someone as being "mentally retarded", but will instead refer to a person as having an "intellectual disability" or as being "intellectually disabled". Advocates are hailing this new law, named after 9-year old Rosa Marcellino, as one step forward in the right direction at improving the way individuals with disabilities are talked about. "Rosa's Law" was originally introduced by Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) on November 7th, 2009 and cleared Congress for signing by the President on September 22nd, 2009.

### MARK YOUR CALENDAR

JULY 27 - 29, 2011  
AL-APSE & ACDD

Alabama APSE and the Alabama Council for Developmental Disabilities will again co-host a conference and training event at the Marriott Renaissance Hotel and Spa at the Convention Center in Montgomery. Preliminary plans call for an exciting line up of speakers and trainers for this event. Conference information will be listed at [www.al-apse.org](http://www.al-apse.org) and/or [www.acdd.org](http://www.acdd.org) when available.

July



The winners of the 2011 AL-APSE Awards will be honored during a cruise on the Harriott II Riverboat. The cruise will set sail on Wednesday evening, July 27 at 7:00 p.m. Conference attendees are invited to join the conference planners, sponsors and award winners for this fun-filled evening. More information will be available in the conference registration brochure. Complimentary tickets will be available to those that RSVP for the cruise. Space will be limited to the first 275 people that register for the conference.

Alabama APSE sponsored **Employment First** training November 3 - 5, 2010 in Tuscaloosa. Twenty five individuals from various supported employment agencies, school systems, state agencies and other organizations successfully completed the training. Two consultants from Virginia Commonwealth University's Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Workplace Supports conducted the training. **Valerie Brooke** holds a Master of Education Degree from Virginia Commonwealth University and has provided technical assistance training and consulting throughout the United States. She is currently serving as Project Director for a national business-to-business marketing initiative funded by the National Institute on Disabilities Rehabilitation Research. **Howard Green** was (continued on page 2)

### Did you Know

- People with disabilities constitute the nation's largest minority group, and the only group any of us can become a member of at any time.
- Between 1990 and 2000, the number of Americans with disabilities increased 25 percent, outpacing any other subgroup of the U.S. population.
- People with disabilities represent the single largest minority group seeking employment in today's marketplace.
- Over 65 percent of working-age adults with disabilities are unemployed. Of these working adults, nearly one third earn an income below the poverty level.
- According to the U.S. Department of Education, workers with disabilities are rated consistently as average or above average in performance, quality and quantity of work, flexibility, and attendance.

Alabama APSE gladly accepts donations to offset costs of regional and statewide training events. Further, donations are utilized for consumer involvement. To learn how your donation can be used to bring a self-advocate or their family member to the state APSE conference, email AL-APSE at [alabamaapse@aol.com](mailto:alabamaapse@aol.com)

(continued) a member of the VCU faculty for more than 15 years before his recent retirement to accept a position with the National Organization on Disability. Prior to coming to VCU, he worked 18 years for the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services. Howard has always been interested in creating business partnerships which bring about a greater opportunity for people with disabilities to gain employment. He has years of expertise in providing training and education on marketing efforts to both rehabilitation and business leaders.

The packed agenda for this 3 day event included classroom instruction and field exercises. Attendees had the opportunity to listen to personal stories from consumer consultants who have been successful at obtaining employment through supported employment services. In addition, an employer panel spoke to the group and provided insight from an employers perspective in regards to hiring practices.

The 3 day training was made possible through grant funding from the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services utilizing stimulus funds. The overall mission of this training is increased employment outcomes for people with significant disabilities. AL-APSE hopes to obtain future funding in order to continue this worthwhile training.



### AL-APSE & ACDD 2011 Featured Speaker

Ryan Loken began his career at Wal-mart as a Senior Management Recruiter, was quickly promoted to Human Resources Manager and then Manager of Talent – East. In his present position of Senior Manager of Talent Services, he is responsible for leading a team of

recruiters focused on ensuring that the Wal-mart US corporate divisions are properly staffed.

Ryan began his career in the consumer packaged goods industry with The Schwan Food Company, where he developed a myriad of technical, managerial and recruiting skills by staffing for the warehouse, human resources, sales, call centers and executive positions.

Ryan has received a number of awards ranging from a series of customer service and candidate care awards, to an award of achievement by Careers in Disabled magazine, and has been quoted in the *Wall Street Journal*.

Ryan will share his personal story focused on overcoming and motivation, to recruiting expertise, preparing for job interviews, resume writing, training recruiters on techniques, and discussing how his visual impairment has impacted his life and lead to success. Don't miss Ryan's keynote address on July 28, 2011.



### AL-APSE Regional Training Event Reentry and Beyond



**January 11, 2011 AIDT Montgomery 10:00 A.M. - 12:00 Noon**

This training will address the barriers that individuals face when released from prison including their transition back into the community. An overview of the *Offender Employment Specialist Training* will be highlighted. Solutions to employment barriers will be discussed. Visit [www.al-apse](http://www.al-apse) for more information.

*AIDT Located at One Technology Court, Montgomery, Alabama*

## 2011 AL-APSE & ACDD Featured Speaker



Sheri Melander-Smith will provide the opening keynote at the 2011 AL-APSE & ACDD conference. Sheri is a highly sought-after inspirational and motivational speaker. In her presentation, she describes how she went from being a disabled child, to an international fashion

model and soap opera actress.

Sheri shares her story in a down-to-earth, authentic and heartwarming style. Sheri's incredible life journey mesmerizes audience members with its ups and downs, twists and turns. Her story begins shortly after she was born when her parents noticed that one of her legs was growing longer than the other. When Sheri was 6 she had an operation that stunted the growth in her longer leg and soon her legs grew even in length. When Sheri was 17 she had a cosmetic procedure to further enhance the appearance of her legs. It wasn't until Sheri was in her 30's that a diagnosis of Klippel-Trenaunay-Weber was made.

Sheri's developed an interest in show business in her early teens. At the age of 14 she won a full scholarship to attend the Children's Theatre of Minneapolis. Self determined, she mailed her school pictures to a local agent and was soon sent on auditions. Her first audition was for a television commercial that she landed.

Shortly after her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday Sheri entered and won the Eileen Ford New York "Face of the 80's" competition (Midwest region), the predecessor for "Supermodel of the World" contest. Her roommate at the Ford's personal home was Christy Turlington. Modeling in New York catapulted Sheri into the world of high fashion modeling. As her career progressed she had the opportunity to travel and work all around the world. In addition to modeling, Sheri continued to pursue her acting career and appeared in many television commercials, small parts in movies, along with a stint on the soap opera "The Bold and the Beautiful". All of Sheri's childhood dreams had come true, including falling in love with a real European Prince.

However, in December 1990 her life took a cruel turn when she had to be rushed to the emergency room for a spinal cord aneurysm(AVM). Doctors told her she

might never walk again. After nine grueling months of therapy, Sheri returned to Los Angeles, to attend UCLA to receive a degree in psychology. Sheri never returned to modeling or her famous European Prince.

After completing her college studies, Sheri got married, moved back to Minnesota and had a beautiful baby boy whom she named Oliver. Sheri returned to school and obtained her MBA in 2004. She felt her life had reached the pinnacle of success with her new career as a Professional Planning Analyst in a governmental role and raising her son Oliver. Everything seemed to be back on track.

Unfortunately for Sheri her AVM returned in 2005. This time Sheri wasn't okay. When she awoke from the surgery in October of 2005, she could not move or feel either of her legs due to paraplegic. Because of the location of the AVM pain emulated from the nerve roots that left Sheri bed bound for an entire year. Curled up in the fetal position, Sheri contemplated life and decided that she was going to live the best life possible regardless of her disability. Sheri is a living example of possibility thinking mixed with the right attitude of "Never Give Up". Don't miss Sheri's inspiring keynote on July 27, 2011.

### *Sheri's Philosophy*

**Life is a gift. Regardless of whether we win or lose, we can always choose to be happy, to create a better life for ourselves □ moment by moment.**

**Joy comes from the heart and is not based on circumstances but on choice. What do you choose?**

**Embrace your given life.**

#### **Coming Soon:**

Dinē Barclay  
Scholarship Application  
To attend National  
APSE Conference  
[www.al-apse.org](http://www.al-apse.org)

#### **Coming Soon:**

Chuck Sheehan  
Scholarship Application  
To pursue higher  
learning  
[www.al-apse.org](http://www.al-apse.org)

**APSE Statement on  
Employment First**

Employment in the general workforce is the first and preferred outcome in the provision of publicly funded services for all working age citizens with disabilities, regardless of level of disability.

To read the complete statement visit

[\*www.apse.org\*](http://www.apse.org)

[\*www.al-apse.org\*](http://www.al-apse.org)

**NATIONAL  
APSE CONFERENCE**

**SAVE THE DATE:**

June 14-16, 2011

Seattle, Washington

Westin Hotel

More Details to come!

[\*www.apse.org\*](http://www.apse.org)