

## Chicago Responds to LDA

Nancie Payne  
Program Chair

Responsiveness to the needs and diversities of our communities was the message as attendees came from the north, east, south and west to take part in the 45th Annual International LDA Conference – a spectacular event without a doubt! Chicago hosted what proved to be an exceptional conference. The venue brought together more than 350 presenters providing over 200 sessions addressing all stages of life: prenatal, early childhood, preschool, elementary, secondary, postsecondary, and adult. Topics ranged from instructional methods to the latest applications of assistive technology; advocacy and public policy needs to assessment and evaluation methods; early childhood factors to information for parents and families; medical and environmental studies to cultural diversity and inclusiveness; mental health advancements to evidence-based practices, adult and transition perspectives to professional preparation; legal concerns to criminal justice system needs. People from all professions, new and seasoned, came together with one common interest – seeking the knowledge and wisdom to ensure that all individuals, children and adults, who have learning disabilities are empowered to thrive and participate fully in society.

Keynote address, delivered by Phillip Jackson, Executive Director of The Black Star Project in Chicago, opened the conference with remarks centered on the importance of providing opportunities for and improving the life quality of others. With a strong emphasis on addressing the needs of all children and adults who



Phillip Jackson

have learning disabilities, Mr. Jackson provided compelling and insightful facts about individuals who come from diverse backgrounds. He urged conference attendees to establish and model inclusiveness and responsiveness to meet the needs of all students, uphold high expectations for success, and reach out to others, forming partnerships that create lasting educational opportunities helping children and students realize full and complete educational potential.

Dr. Margo Mastropieri, Professor, George Mason University continued the theme of responsiveness and the acquisition of student knowledge through specific cognitive strategies and approaches, grounded in theory and research, that provided teachers and parents meaningful, concrete “take-aways.” Dr. Mastropieri presented demonstrations of these inclusive instructional techniques using science and history subject matter to illustrate the retention variables when teaching students who have learning disabilities in integrated classroom settings.

Dr. Peter Scheidt, Director of the National Children’s Study at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Institutes of Health provided conference attendees with an overview of the National Children’s Study. His remarks included a review of the findings thus far as the study bridges the gap between our knowledge of environmental toxins and factors that impact children, adversely affecting development and health

from prenatal through pre-school ages. He described current steps underway to begin to minimize or eliminate these factors and provided several suggestions and helpful recommendations, noting the need for a heightened responsiveness to the link between developmental and learning disabilities and exposure to environmental toxins.

The conference hosted a multitude of adult and transition sessions each day, providing significant learning and sharing opportunities for consumers and their families, counselors and rehabilitation



Ben Gendell

providers, adult basic skills and postsecondary educators and other professionals who concentrate on serving adults who have learning disabilities. On Thursday, Ben Gendell, author of *Poems for the People*, stirred the luncheon attendees by his honest and forthright story of pain and determination about dealing with his Dyslexia and the obstacles he faced both in school and in his personal life. Ben’s caring message, “love yourself, value yourself and believe in yourself” clearly sent a ripple of responsiveness together with inspiration and hope for all who have or know someone who has

### CHICAGO RESPONDS

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LDA would like to thank the **National Institute for Learning Development (NILD)** for their support of our 45th Annual International Conference. They were inadvertently left out of conference publicity. Please visit them at [www.NILD.org](http://www.NILD.org).

## Newsbriefs

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Lynne Cannon, Editor

## Connie Parr Elected LDA Board President

At the 2008 Delegate Assembly, the following officers were elected:

### President

Connie Parr (Illinois)

### First Vice President

Pat Lillie (North Carolina)

### Second Vice President

Sharon Bloechle (Nebraska)

### Secretary

B.J. Wiemer (Missouri)

### Treasurer

Myrna Soule (Oregon)

All officers, except the LDA President, are elected for one-year terms. The president is elected for a two-year term. Immediate Past President Charlie Giglio (New York) remains on the Executive Committee and Sandy Cort (Maine) represents the Board of Directors on the Executive Committee.

The following individuals were elected to the Board of Directors for three-year terms: Tony DiMaso (New York), Barbara Glaeser (California), Peter Squire (Virginia), and Ann Whitten (South Carolina). Linda Smith (Utah) was elected by the State Presidents to serve as their representative on the LDA Board of Directors.



An advertisement for Beacon College. At the top is the Beacon College logo, a circular seal with a book and a lamp. Below the logo, the text reads: "BEACON COLLEGE", "The nation's only four-year accredited college exclusively for students with language-based learning disabilities or AD/HD.", and "Also serving LD Gifted." Below this is the phrase "Find yourself at Beacon College!". At the bottom, there is contact information: "BEACON COLLEGE (352) 787-7249", "admissions@beaconcollege.edu", and "www.beaconcollege.edu". The background of the ad shows a young woman with blonde hair smiling and sitting at a computer keyboard.

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## Annual Report to the LDA Board of Directors



*Charles Giglio,  
LDA President  
LDA Board of  
Directors*

**W**ell, it all began on the convention floor of the Delegate Assembly several years ago. It was clear that the States wanted change and that disillusionment had set in with National. It was time to send a message. The first stage of the rocket of reform for LDA had taken off.

Barely familiar with the internal and external politics of our organization, I was then nominated for the Executive Committee and was asked to begin the paradigm shift that would be both a wake up call and a call for the re-empowerment of LDA's State Affiliates into the National organization.

How had things gone awry? After all, the magnanimous souls who had parented our beloved organization were second to none in legislative know-how, fluent in advocacy jargon, and on fire with the will to fight for our children and adults with learning disabilities.

As I discussed in previous missives to our constituents, this sort of situation occurs when a generation of entitlements is lulled into lethargy and somnolence, dimming people's memories of tough times and rough periods. I am happy to report to you that the sound of the trumpet has been heard, the troops are gathered on the hillside and the banner of hope is once again raised as LDA's voice is united in its goal of being recognized as the national leader in legislative and constituent advocacy for children and adults with learning disabilities.

As I step aside, I salute and thank the toilers in the field for righting our ship and setting it on course and for supporting our Board and Administration with Igniting a New Era as detailed in LDA's Strategic

Plan 2005-2010. It's hard to believe how much has been accomplished since the 2005 Reno Conference, especially the adjustment of the traditional LDA mindset, which up to that point had served us well.

We no longer could count on astronomical attendance at the national Conference, our infrastructure was benignly neglected and worn down and our overly broad involvement in a cornucopia of worthwhile causes diluted our purpose and resolve.

Armed with the analysis and synthesis of LDA's Strategic Plan 2005-2010, the following overarching goals were agreed to by LDA's Board of Directors in October of 2005:

1. Strengthen Organizational Effectiveness---Board restructuring, Leadership initiatives at the National Office, Development of sustainable funding, Support of State and Local initiatives

I believe this important goal aims at the heart of LDA's infrastructure and, with the hiring of LDA's Executive Director, Sheila Buckley, is well on its way to addressing issues, personnel and national leadership

paradigms. These will lead to LDA's success in streamlining LDA's operations, introducing modern efficiency models and moving the organization's governance from a mom and pop kind of operation to a technologically savvy business capable of garnering respect in the halls on Congress and the boardrooms of generous donors.

During a recent Board retreat, our members identified new Board member skills necessary for successful attainment of our vision and mission in the world of learning disabilities. We need to strengthen this resolve and renew our efforts to attract new Board members who don't look or think as we do but who can show us how to broaden our reach in the disability community.

Sheila Buckley, LDA's Executive Director, has already demonstrated her aptitude for attracting talented and passionate national office staff as well as assimilating dedicated veteran employees into the pro-

### ANNUAL REPORT

*continued on page 4*

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## ANNUAL REPORT

*continued from page 3*

fessionalism of LDA's mission. She has also been able to restructure present grants, attract fledgling donations from interested parties and has become involved in a state by state inventory of service and cooperation with State Affiliates.

I urge you to continue your support of this gifted leader and to listen to her sensible suggestions about doing things differently.

While recognizing the work to be done, let's all work together to maintain a positive attitude and tone to our constituents and each other.

2. Focus on Addressing the Needs of all of our constituents in the Learning Disabilities Community---Strengthen Services & Support to reflect changing constituent needs, examine and update membership model to reflect current market trends, expand focus on adults

I understand the reluctance of LDA's national and state leaders to tinker with current membership models. However, innovation is needed and we need go no farther than our State Affiliates to discover

what new membership models are working for them. Coupled with wonderful talent at the National office level, I believe a new National membership model is just around the corner.

In addition, exploration of new funding streams is a must for the very survival of our organization. The world is different, our persons with learning disabilities are different and we are different than we were 45 years ago. Embracing new funding opportunities is a priority of our Executive Director and I am pleased that the Board has completely supported this initiative as well as the drive to publish up-to-date information on our organization in the form of a standardized brochure.

3. Strengthen LDA's Role and Presence in the Learning Disabilities Community. Build on LDA Conference and Workshops to make them the premier information and networking events in the learning disabilities community

During our LDA Annual Conference in Chicago, we witnessed the implementation of this lofty goal. Conference committees exhausted themselves in examining current programming and its relevance to our constituents' needs. Since revisiting

conference philosophy and collaborating with like-minded organizations, it is certain we will witness continued efficiency and delivery models in Salt Lake City and beyond. Thanks to all for your tireless efforts.

Coupled with the above initiatives is the drive to enhance LDA's website, introduce pod casts and web casts, align the National and State databases, pursue products for national market distribution and establish a national research agenda to reflect our constituents' needs.

All of these efforts are beginning to reap rewards. So, we end where we began--let's not abandon LDA's Strategic Plan 2005-2010.

As I step aside, I wish to thank each and every one of you for your support in difficult times. We have turned the corner. We are seeing the light!

Let us continue to serve our children and adults with learning disabilities by not turning back. Let's look back with respect but continue our journey forward.

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## Executive Director's Annual Report to the Board



*Sheila Buckley  
LDA Executive  
Director*

I am pleased to report that on February 26, the LDA Board of Directors approved a proposal to elevate the work, role and function of the LDA headquarters staff, in an integration plan that will provide the organization greater mobility in its work with constituents while ensuring full

implementation of LDA's Strategic Plan.

This integration comes on the heels of a Board meeting last fall, at which time I shared my perspectives with members at the completion of my first year as Executive Director and after numerous conversations with affiliates. Despite LDA's rich, 45-year history, whose course was charted by many people sitting in this room, my message was simple --- volunteers alone should not and cannot shoulder all of the work that needs to be done at the national level. We recognize, with reverence, that the face of LDA and of our volunteers is changing and we must adapt if we are to grow. This plan will make more effective and efficient use of limited volunteer time and utilize the skills and expertise of the headquarters staff on tending to the day to day business of running the organization. The plan affords Board members the time to focus on the critical functions of governance, oversight of the organization's finances, bylaws and policies and stewardship of the strategic plan, of which the Board and I are close partners. The work of many Board Committees will include not a staff liaison but an active member, as much of LDA's work, particularly with membership and fundraising is staff driven. It is my hope and wish that by working together to implement this plan, we can then be of greater assistance to affiliates in delivering resources, training, new members and new

revenue streams as well as the continuity of service we all want for LDA.

The impetus behind this integration not only closely aligns LDA with the structure of most non-profits but it incorporates the talent and experience of our current LDA staff and I should note that a pivotal segment of the plan will better hone their skills and expertise in key program areas.

I can't say enough about the volunteers of LDA and how they keep the organization moving but LDA staff are often the cogs in the wheel and a central function on any given day.

Thanks in large part to them, our conferences are seamless and successful, our finances are in order and managed conscientiously, we're making steady and impactful progress with the Healthy Children Project and we're developing stronger relationships with affiliates, cultivating new ones and bringing about new revenue sources on a variety of fronts and I look forward to providing updates on those areas in the future.

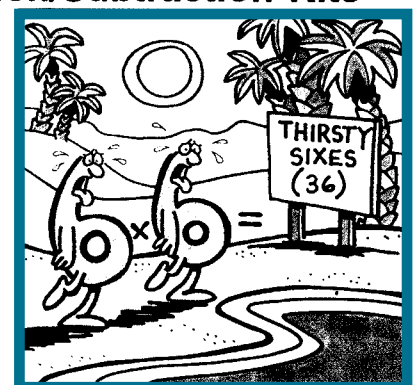
Speaking of new relationships, I am excited to tell you that a new advocate has

emerged to work with LDA – his name is David Irons Jr., Cornerback for the Atlanta Falcons. He came to us last summer as a young man who himself is no stranger to the challenges of learning disabilities and who now wants to give back and ultimately serve as a spokesperson for our organization. I met David's father David Sr. last November in Atlanta. Also a former NFL player, he really struck me not only as a parent who is a great source of support to his children but an inspiration to all. This is a great opportunity for LDA and one I believe will propel LDA to the forefront in the public eye and along with other initiatives, will move us from a position of sustainability to a position of thriving.

I want to thank Charlie Giglio for his leadership to LDA and the support he has given me since my tenure began 18 months ago. I have greatly appreciated his partnership, counsel, wisdom and friendship.

Finally, I want to thank the LDA Board of Directors for their support and efforts and our affiliates and volunteers, without whom our mission would not move.

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# NFL's David Irons Jr. Introduced at LDA Annual Conference

## *Irons will serve as Advocate and Spokesperson for LDA National*

As LDA celebrated its 45th anniversary in the city where the organization was first formed, Chicago seemed the perfect setting to introduce LDA's new relationship with Atlanta Falcons football star David Irons, Jr. who himself has learning disabilities and now wants to help by giving hope to others.

David attended the LDA Awards Banquet with his father David Irons, Sr. (a former running back for the Detroit

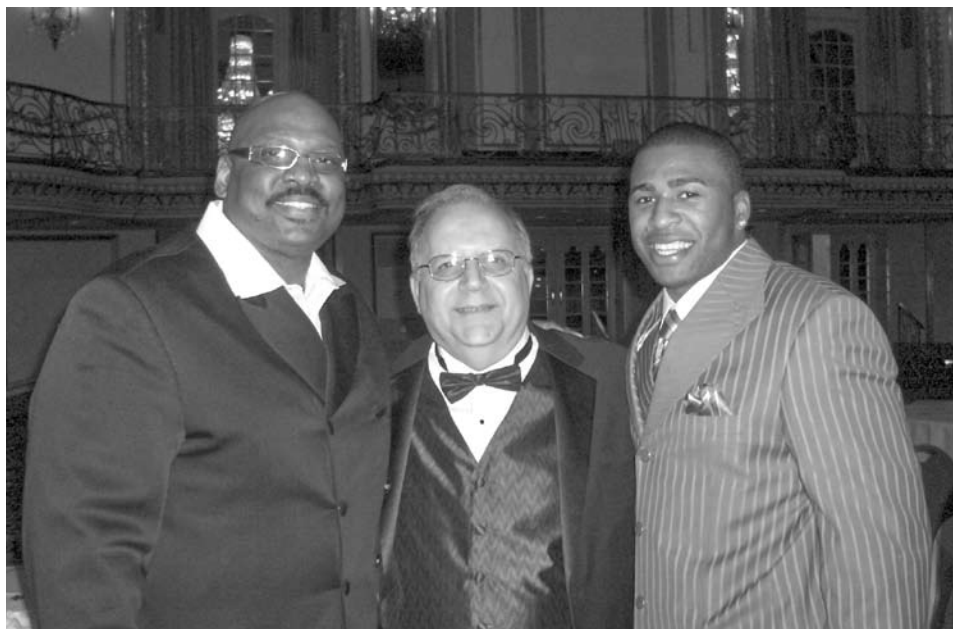
Lions) who contacted LDA last summer at the urging of his son who wants his personal story to have a national audience and a positive impact to young people with learning disabilities. During his remarks to Banquet guests, David briefly related his experience in school, waiting outside his special education classroom until the halls were nearly empty before entering. He also noted how references to being "a dumb athlete" have actually motivated him to pursue his ambitions while encouraging

others never to give up.

A defensive back, David was selected by the Atlanta Falcons in the 6th round of the 2007 NFL draft after playing for Auburn University.

This is truly an exciting partnership and opportunity for LDA. We look forward to sharing more news with you about this national effort in future issues.

For more information about David and to read his story, please visit [www.ldaamerica.org](http://www.ldaamerica.org)



Chris Alexander, uncle to David Irons Jr., LDA President Charlie Giglio, and David Irons Jr.


**LDA is bringing Atlanta Falcons Cornerback David Irons Jr. direct to you through our website!**

Thanks to the generosity of Atlanta Falcons Cornerback David Irons Jr., LDA is auctioning an autographed Atlanta Falcons Football Jersey of #30 David Irons!

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# Vicki Goshon is LDA Educator of the Year

Vicki Goshon from Iowa is LDA's Sam Kirk Educator of the Year for 2008. This award is named in honor of Dr. Samuel A. Kirk, psychologist, educator, scholar, humanitarian and pioneer in the field of learning disabilities. Vicki Goshon exemplifies that educator who changes lives by going the "extra mile". Her career in the field of learning disabilities spans 29 years. Her devotion to her students' success is reflected in her philosophy of education when she states, "I believe that we must serve every child at every stage of life, whether their academic skills are just emerging or their academic skills are budding. All children are able to learn, but at different rates."



Vicki began her teaching career in 1979 in Glen Carbon, Illinois. She has been in her current position at Cedar Heights Elementary School in Cedar Falls Iowa, teaching children with learning disabilities since 2005. Vicki is known for providing quality and innovative services to children with learning disabilities. Vicki employs sound strategies and the latest technology to ensure that her students learn.

Vicki has made significant contributions outside of the classroom that contribute to success of individuals with learning disabilities. She has served on the Board of Directors for LDA of Iowa for 11 years. She has served as Iowa Conference Chairperson and Co-Chairperson for 7 years. She served as LDA of Iowa State President for 3 years. She also served on the LDA National Juvenile Justice Task Force. She has made presentations at the state and local levels.

In addition to her activities associated with LDA, Vicki has also found time to provide summer school and after school educational services to students and worked collaboratively with the University of Northern Iowa to provide tutors to students who needed services who couldn't afford them. She is also active in her church, the Cedar Valley Food Bank and Habitat for Humanity.

Vicki's accomplishments in the field of learning disabilities are many but perhaps one of the most important ones was highlighted at the LDA of Iowa conference in October by Vicki's daughter, Crystal. Vicki and Crystal were part of a panel: "LD-What's Our Story?" Panel members were asked what was the most important factor in overcoming their difficulties with learning disabilities. Crystal's response was

just two words, "my mother". Crystal said that her mother worked with her every night and encouraged her. Crystal graduated from college and now owns her own business.

LDA salutes Vicki Goshon as the 2008 Sam Kirk Educator of the Year and all the nominees for this year.

- Mary Hardy, Illinois
- Janet Hodge, Indiana
- Christine Palmer Thornton, Maryland
- Amy Barto, Michigan
- Janie Hodge, South Carolina

LDA would like to thank the Learning Disabilities Foundation of America for their support.

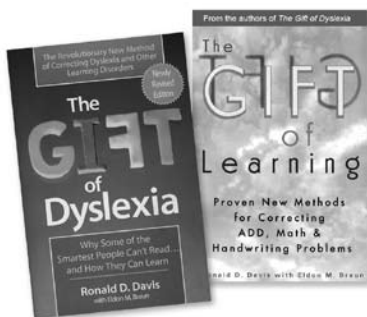
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## Parent Support

Being a member of LDA can be an enormous support to the parents of a child with a learning disability. When parents initially discover that their child has a learning disability, they may have feelings of guilt, worry, uncertainty, or anger. As parents look for help they may receive conflicting advice and become more confused and frustrated. Parents may even deny the problem or blame each other. An LDA affiliate can help parents understand and cope with their child.

## Information and Referral Network

An inquiry to the local affiliate, state office, or national LDA office can be a critical first step in providing help to a person with learning disabilities. Through the Annual International Conference and state affiliate conferences and workshops, LDA provides a forum for questions on learning disabilities and highlights new technology and ap-

proaches for teaching individuals with learning disabilities. Attendance at conferences, workshops, symposiums and support groups reaches tens of thousands of participants yearly.

The LDA publication, *Learning Disabilities: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, is a quarterly peer-reviewed publication oriented toward professionals in the field of learning disabilities.

## Legislation

LDA provides information and recommends action on pending legislation which may affect individuals with learning disabilities and/or their families. At the request of Congress, LDA representatives testify on matters relating to special education, literacy and employment programs. LDA holds and participates in numerous forums on legal rights of individuals with learning disabilities.

## School Program Development

LDA works with school systems to assure quality programs and better services for students with learning disabilities. At the state and local level, LDA works frequently with school systems in planning and

implementing programs for early identification and diagnosis, as well as remediation in resource and special education classroom situations. Because of the relationship of learning disabilities to school drop-out and delinquency rates, LDA works with educators, correctional authorities and jurists in order to develop comprehensive approaches to education.

## Adult Issues

LDA publishes materials on issues of importance to adults with learning disabilities such as adult literacy, parenting, and special populations. A special series of bulletins address civil rights and accommodations in various settings, like college, the workplace, and the military.

LDA never shares or sells membership information!

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# No Child Left Behind—a tale of unintended consequences

By Alvin Granowsky, Ed.D.

**A**ristotle is reported to have said “All who have meditated on the art of governing mankind have been convinced that the fate of empires depends on the education of youth.”

Abraham Lincoln is quoted as calling education “...the most important subject we as a people can engage in.”

Theodore Roosevelt is credited with saying “To educate a man in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society.”

In these three statements we observe both the historical importance placed on education as well as an understanding that the essence of education must never be simplified to a simple imparting of information and skills.

The *No Child Left Behind* program highlights our government’s commitment to education as a national priority. And that is viewed by most as a positive direction for the long term good of our nation. Unfortunately, there is a serious flaw in the approach which needs to be fully addressed before it causes major harm in the education of our nation’s children.

Setting measurable standards and developing tests to ensure that these learning standards are being met by all students especially in critical skills of reading, writing and computation has

undeniable merit. It is hard to fault the effort to develop and publicize a national report card on the effectiveness of public schools in educating our nation’s children in these important areas of learning. However, even the best of our intentions and efforts can bring with them *unintended consequences* that can prove harmful to our long term goal of ensuring a meaningful and effective education for all our children.

Let me explain. In its implementation, the *No Child Left Behind* approach explicitly equates a student’s test scores in basic skills, especially reading, with a successful educational experience. Schools in which students score high on these tests are awarded positive labels, such as schools of excellence, and their teachers and administrators rewarded. Conversely, schools that have low scores and/or do not show needed improvements in test results, receive negative labels, such as unacceptable, and their teachers and administrators threatened with loss of jobs.

Based on a cursory examination, this approach would seem to make sense and the outcry by many teachers, administrators, educational associations and parents against the “high stake” testing and labeling approach employed would appear to be without merit—little more than defensive postures to mask their own shortcomings. And so the *No Child Left Behind* program continues with minor adjustments in its

implementation, for example, changing specific tests used or smoothing out conflicts over the testing of children with learning disabilities or children from other countries with limited facility with the English language.

Unfortunately, for the long term health and improvement of our nation’s public school systems, the law of unintended consequences has come into play. Why and how? Let us begin with this reality: it is no simple matter to specify fully what learning is actually involved in a meaningful education and more importantly what it takes to help a child learn and grow in this learning. As a guide in illustrating all that an education might encompass, **Phi Delta Kappa**, the highly respected national association of professional educators, has developed a listing including 18 goals of education. Included in this listing are the following goals—

*Understand and practice democratic ideas and ideals*

*Learn how to examine and use information*

*Develop good character and self respect*

*Understand and practice the skills of family living*

*Learn how to use leisure time*

*Learn how to be a good citizen*

*Learn how to be a good manager of money, property, and resources*

*Develop skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening*

*Learn about and try to understand the changes that take place in the world*

*Appreciate culture and beauty in the world*

*Develop a desire for learning now and in the future*

*Learn how to respect and get along with people who think, dress, and act differently*

*Gain a general education*

*Develop pride in work and feelings of self worth*

*Develop skills to enter a specific field of work*

*Learn to respect and get along with people with whom we work and live*

*Gain information needed to make a job selection*

*Practice and understand the ideas of*



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### health and safety

**Phi Delta Kappa** sends this listing of educational goals to members of its association periodically to determine which of these goals receive priority in their schools at a particular time. Over a 25 year period I have personally used this listing of goals in workshops for teachers, administrators, parents and community members to help them determine and make explicit the educational priorities in their schools. I have observed that while individuals hold differing views of what is most important in a youngster's education, a majority of the group will consistently come to a general agreement on the 5 most important goals. This has held true over time and in diverse parts of our country.

Achieving success in helping students meet the goals listed below is considered by a majority of educators and parents most important in evaluating how well a school is performing:

- Develop good character and self-respect*
- Develop skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening*
- Develop a desire for learning now and in the future*
- Learn to respect and get along with people with whom we work and live*
- Develop pride in work and feelings of self-worth*

(As an aside, after many years of leading these workshops, as well as noting the similar findings of **Phi Delta Kappa**, I am confident that if today you brought together diverse members of your community and guided them through a process of consensus building using this same list about what really matters in the education of youngsters, these same five goals would in all probability remain at the top of their list.)

A surprise came when I took the next step and attempted to lead the participants to a consensus concerning which one of these five priority goals should be considered the most important. As a former Director of Reading for the public schools of Greensboro, NC, and Dallas, TX, I began with the assumption that building skills in reading and writing would always be the most important priority for educating youngsters... and found this not to be the case. Coming to a

consensus on what was the most important goal of education was difficult to achieve. In a number of communities, we had to call it a draw—no one of these five goals could claim a decisive majority.

In schools in which reading scores had been low, *developing skills in reading, writing speaking and listening* was typically listed by most people as the most important priority. However, in schools in which student performance had been high, more often than not, a goal involving an affective area, not easily measured on group tests, such as developing (1) *good character and self-respect*, (2) *pride in work and feelings of self worth*, or (3) *desire for learning now and in the future was placed by most people in the top position*. It wasn't that they didn't consider skill in reading to be essential for they did. They did believe, however, that these affective goals involve critical identity issues and ultimately serve as the foundation upon which success in learning and life and reading will be achieved by students.

If you agree that (1) an education includes multiple learning goals, and (2) that some of the highest priority goals are not included in the *No Child Left Behind* evaluation of a school's performance, we are now ready to consider the law of unintended consequences.

The power to test is the power to control. That is a time-tested maxim which translates to this reality—what is tested

will be taught, especially when those test results will be widely publicized and consequences for poor performance will be severe: students can be held back, schools stigmatized with negative labels, and staff members threatened with loss of their jobs. Conversely, schools in which students are high performing, or improving in their performance, as measured by these state or national tests, will be rewarded with positive labels and financial incentives.

Well, you might question, what can be wrong with that? Let me suggest there are a number of things that can be wrong. Here is a sampling of harmful unintended consequences that have come into play

The type of pressure and rewards being placed on schools to have high test scores has resulted in an obsession with performance on tests, in many cases distorting presentation of the actual content to be learned. Classroom time previously used for learning, discussing, and exploring ideas is now spent focusing narrowly on content expected to be on the test or simply practicing test taking skills.

The curriculum in far too many cases becomes narrowed to meet test requirements, eliminating worthy areas of learning and personal exploration in topics of interest that enrich knowledge and nurture a desire for learning. Time for art and music, for example, is curtailed

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and in extreme cases eliminated. A student's legitimate question—why do we need to know this?—receives a practical response—because it's on the test.

Affective areas of education that are the foundation for learning and future growth are not included on the group tests of knowledge and skills used to evaluate a

teacher's performance or a student's growth. As a result these critical goals of education become undervalued, even pushed aside, in the obsessive concern over achieving higher performance on tests of basic skills. Just think of the self-concept of children with learning disabilities who know their performance on tests makes them a liability for the school. Consider for just a moment the threat these tests pose to a learning challenged child's sense of self-respect and worth. Perhaps, then, you might understand

the protests raised by their anxious parents. Consider, on the other hand, the plight of the high performing student whose learning experience is contained, even stifled, by a narrow instructional focus to ensure success on a test.

In the face of intense pressure, human beings will take on defensive postures. You can count on that. Think about executives of corporate giants faced with the need to demonstrate growth in profits on quarterly and annual reports. As national headlines tell us, creative (misleading to outright dishonest) accounting approaches all too often come into play. Even worse, a company's long term health may be jeopardized as budgets for research and development are shifted to promotions that can impact the current bottom line....and, for the short term, make the company and its leadership look good. How different is that from a school in which a teacher or administrator "cheats" to make the test scores look better? Or more significantly, force students to focus on a narrow curriculum and practice incessantly on taking tests because that will impact the current test results...and for the short term make the school and its educators look good?



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I am not justifying this behavior for it is clearly wrong. However, it should be understood that intense pressure does not often bring out the best in us-- that when threatened some people will resort to unethical, protective actions.

You may argue that the information and skills being taught and tested will remain with students for a lifetime serving as their springboard for success in life? Shouldn't that justify the *No Child Left Behind* approach? If it were true, that might be a valid argument, but it isn't true. Let me note three things that happen to that learning:

a) The human mind does not retain information it does not deem meaningful or useful. If the reason for its being learned is to pass a test or a course—and that has been done—you can count on forgetting to take place. As a senior citizen, I suspect I have forgotten more than I will ever learn the rest of my life. Information and skills, I learned in school such as how to find a square root, or each state's capital, or the major battles of the Revolutionary War are today just vague memories of something I once knew. How about you? Just think

of all that you once knew and have now forgotten.

Over time the human brain modifies and distorts information and facts to better blend with its world view. We have all had the experience of being positive about something we once learned only to find that being positive did not mean we were accurate.

Most significant, much of the information students learn at any point in time and are tested on is finite. It has a limited life span. For example, when I was in school, I learned that the population of the United States was 140 million people

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and that New York State had the largest population of any state. That is no longer true. What about you? How much of what you once learned in school is no longer accurate?

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During the decade of the 1990's, I had the opportunity to serve as Vice President of Education for World Book Encyclopedia. In that role, I worked with the editors and publisher of that respected encyclopedia and learned that a set of World Book had about 14,000 pages and each year 30 to 40 % of those pages needed some changes, usually small but sometimes big. What didn't changed? Anyone who was dead for over 100 years tended to stay constant, but not always. What changed? Anyone who was alive changed as their lives were changing. Anything involving politics or politicians changed. Just think of all that you once learned about the U.S.S.R. and its leaders--it's all changed and in its place we now have Russia and a number of small countries most of us never knew existed. Our knowledge base in science and technology is constantly changing; what once was state of art knowledge is now obsolete or found to be wrong, possibly even detrimental. The author and futurist Alvin Toffler put it this way, "The illiterate of the future are not those who cannot read or write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn."

Several years ago I was invited to write an article for a professional development series for educators. In summing up the role of a teacher, I wrote: "Each day in the classroom, teachers observe what

research confirms—each child is unique. Each brings different experiences and prior knowledge to learning; each has different learning strengths and preferences. The challenge is for teachers to get to know children as individuals and to find out each child's reading level, comfort level with informational text, prior knowledge of key vocabulary and concepts and emotional response to a particular topic." Reading over those words today, I can only think—what a challenge for the teacher!

The question that we must ask ourselves is how do we support teachers in educating, in the full sense of that word, all the unique students who enter the classroom every day. The teacher's challenge is truly great and unquestioningly support is needed. The proper question is how do we provide that support? Ask yourself, is *The No Child Left Behind* program really the best approach we can come up with? Is it even a good approach when you consider the unintended consequences that have flowed from it?

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# LDA ACROSS THE STATES



Linda Smith  
State President's Representative

**H**ello to all state presidents, board members, members and friends of LDA across the nation. My name is Linda Smith. I am the state president for LDA of Utah and the newly elected President's Representative. Joan Teach, state president of LDA of Georgia will serve as the Vice-Representative. We are honored to have been chosen to represent the state presidents on the LDA Board of Directors. We will work diligently to share ideas, messages, news, concerns, and issues with you during this year.

In February, we were in Chicago where nearly 2,000 individuals attended the International LDA Conference. The conference had a variety of speakers and sessions that were informative and excellent. The exhibit hall was filled with wonderful displays and assistive technology. I loved trying out the different types of assistive technology at the exhibitors' booths instead of relying on brochures and the internet for information about products. The Chicago North LDA Chapter and LDA of Illinois did an excellent job of hosting the conference.

It is energizing to attend a conference where individuals with LD (learning disabilities), parents, and professionals all come together to improve the lives of individuals with LD. I am an adult with LD, I have adult children with LD, and I have chosen a career in the disability field. At the LDA Conference you meet a variety of individuals from across the nation who you immediately relate to as you trade stories. You begin by talking to a stranger in a session and end up becoming close friends by the end of the conference. If you haven't attended an LDA International Conference or haven't done so in several years, make plans now to attend the next conference in my home state of Utah in February 2009.

At the conference, several states were recognized through their Proud Projects. Proud Projects are innovative programs or

materials developed by a state association to benefit individuals with learning disabilities. Proud Projects must include the name of the Learning Disabilities Association and be able to be replicated by other states. If you are interested in creating a similar project in your state you can contact the National LDA Office or the LDA President in the state in which the project was developed.

The Proud Project Grand Prize recipient was the LDA of Indiana. They created a comprehensive conference book for participants that included the program, handouts from all the presenters, advertising, and much more. LDA of Indiana received \$300 and a complimentary registration to the 2009 LDA Conference in Utah. The first place winner was LDA of Michigan for their Healthy Children Project. LDA of Michigan received \$150 and a complimentary registration to the 2009 Conference. The second place winner was LDA of Georgia with a project titled "Kid's Gift Award." LDA of Georgia sponsored a statewide contest which celebrated children with learning disabilities who had discovered success. LDA of Georgia received a complimentary registration to the 2009 Conference. Other projects receiving honorable mention were LDA of Missouri for their Teacher Lesson Plan Organizer and LDA of Oklahoma for their Transition Toolkit.

The highlight of the conference for me was meeting and getting to know the different state presidents and LDA Board Members from across the nation. The state presidents are a committed group of caring individuals who believe in the need for LDA and who work hard to sustain LDA in their state. During the conference, the state presidents met daily to learn about issues that impacted individuals with learning disabilities and discuss the needs of overseeing a successful state association. It was encouraging to meet with each other in order to renew our energy, share ideas across states, and realize that we are not alone in our struggle of serving as state president.

The presidents spent Saturday morning with the newly elected LDA Executive Committee in leadership training which was lead by Ernie Florence and BJ Wiemer of the Affiliate Support Committee.

Since the conference the LDA Affiliate Support Committee has already met to discuss the concerns expressed by state presidents at the conference. The Affiliate Support Committee looked at each issue listed by the state presidents and listed them under four broad goals. The four goals for the following year are 1) to increase communication and support to state affiliates, 2) to provide leadership development and training materials to state affiliates, 3) to promote affiliate recognition, and 4) to collaborate with and support other LDA Committees. The Affiliate Support Committee consists of BJ Wiemer, Chair (Missouri), Linda Smith, State Presidents' Rep (Utah), Joan Teach, Vice-Rep (Georgia), Ernie Florence (Illinois), Ann Whitten (South Carolina), Sharon Bloechle, coordinator (Nebraska), and Sharon Tanner (LDA National Office).


I look forward to serving each of the states in my role as State President's Rep. If you have any ideas that you would like to share or if I can do anything to assist you throughout the year, please do not hesitate to contact me at [ldaupresident@hotmail.org](mailto:ldaupresident@hotmail.org).

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# LDA Welcomes Anne Ford

Ann Kornblet  
Chicago Conference Chair



I am excited about how much progress our son has made this year at MLC. Our friends and family have noticed his maturity and increased self-confidence. We have also noticed his broadened field of interests and a higher capacity for happiness. Thank you!

—MLC parent



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After a long and exciting week attending conference sessions and meetings, LDA conference attendees look forward to the traditional Awards Banquet as a time to visit, relax and just have a good time. Banquet attendees were not disappointed this year as they attended the cocktail reception and banquet in the beautiful Grand Ballroom at the Hilton Chicago.

Anne Ford, the speaker for the event, joined the cocktail crowd and visited with many and signed her new book, *On Their Own*. Attendees were also pleased to greet John-Richard Thompson, co-author of *Laughing Allegra* and *On Their Own* and award-winning playwright and novelist.

Anne Ford is the daughter of Henry Ford II and former Chairman of the Board of the National Center for Learning Disabilities. In her acclaimed memoir *Laughing Allegra*, she shared her story of raising a child with learning disabilities, which was featured in Newsweek and USA Today and on NPR, NBC, and Lifetime.

Her second book, *On Their Own*, is an important family guide to the many challenges of preparing adult children with learning disabilities for the future. The book addresses a wide range of topics including: social skills and dating; sibling relationships; job hunting and interaction with employers and co-workers; finding the right college or trade school; and estate planning. A special section is devoted to exclusive interviews with prominent individuals who have surmounted their learning disabilities to achieve great success.

The LDA banquet attendees were absolutely pleased by Ms. Ford's talk, as proven by the standing ovation she received as she concluded. LDA members, teachers and parents alike came up to her afterwards and expressed their thanks and stated that she had indeed "touched a chord."

Some of the thoughts Anne Ford shared about writing both *Laughing Allegra* and *On Their Own*: "I wrote the book for other parents as a story of hope and success. I also admit in my book to making mistakes, largely because the information was not out there the way it is today. I wanted to share



my mistakes with parents, so they could learn by them, and to express the fact that for each of us the journey is difficult. It is by sharing our common experiences that we can help each other and our children have a better future.

"I have very strong feelings about parents advocating for their child. No one can do that as well. And if you don't do it, who will? Many parents, however, are unaware of their rights and those of their child. It's important for parents to know these rights and not be afraid to demand that their child receive the necessary services. As far as self-advocacy, my advice to *Allegra* was to be open about her disability. A person's ability to live life fully depends on knowing and recognizing one's self, disability and all."

And Anne shares her feelings about meeting other parents, learning and writing *On Their Own*: "I hope parents will glean what they need from this book and gain a little insight from the experience of others, even if the situation appears to be different from their own. I ask parents not to compare their situation with mine or that of any others in the book, but to look for similarities in attitudes and actions, things they can relate to, identify with, and learn from, in the same way I have learned from so many of them."

# 2008 Awards Banquet

The beautiful Hilton Chicago Hotel hosted the 45th Annual LDA International Conference and on Friday evening the Grand Ballroom was the scene of the 2008 Awards Banquet. Truly a special evening this year, with table decorations provided by the Kinzie Elementary School in Palos Heights, Illinois and over three hundred people attending the banquet to join in the awards ceremony and to listen to Anne Ford, the banquet speaker.

President Charlie Giglio opened the banquet with a number of thank you's to the many volunteers responsible for putting the conference together. He thanked all the volunteers of LDA of Illinois and thanked the banquet co-sponsors, Eagle Hill School, Greenwich, Connecticut and the National Center for Learning Disabilities in New York City.

The banquet is also a time to recognize retiring national board members and retiring members of the LDA Professional Advisory Board. President Giglio recognized Frank Kline, Ph.D., Seattle Pacific University, School of Education, retiring Chairman of the LDA PAB. Professor Kline has served a number of years as an impor-

tant part of the LDA conference Program Committee along with his important commitment to the PAB. He brought a fresh outlook to the PAB and worked to have an ongoing dialogue between the PAB and the LDA Board of Directors and committee chairmen. Professor Kline continues to work with Janet Lerner and Lynne Cannon to produce a professional journal that LDA continues to be proud of.

## LD Foundation Recognized

The Learning Disabilities Foundation, formerly the ACLD Foundation, has long been a support of LDA and many projects around the country that promote understanding of learning disabilities. This year the LDA Board of Directors extended formal thanks to the LD Foundation Board of Managers for the years and years of guidance and support. Jean Petersen, the foundation Executive Director, accepted the recognition on behalf of the Board of Managers.

## The President's Award

The President's Award is given annually to the individual who has shown



outstanding service to LDA during the year. The recipient is selected by the LDA President. "Pat Lillie of North Carolina," stated President Giglio, "is to receive the President's Award tonight. Pat has been particularly helpful to me as president, and of course to LDA. She has been a leader in her state many years and continues to work at the state level, even while serving on the LDA Executive Committee and chairing the important Public Policy Committee. Pat has worked tirelessly to present LDA's

## AWARDS BANQUET

*continued on page 18*

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## AWARDS BANQUET

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views at many meetings of federal agencies, the Dept. of Education, and at Congressional hearings.”

### Hyman Gardsbane Pioneer Award 2008

The Hyman Gardsbane Award is an award to honor a person who has been instrumental in establishing LDA as a vital national advocacy organization. A person who has been a trail blazer in the field of learning disabilities. This year there were two special pioneer awards to present to very dedicated and unique individuals:

#### Dorothy Crawford, Arizona



Moving LDA into new arenas is this woman's specialty. From founding a "Life Development" program that quickly became a national model to urging recognition of the link between learning disabilities and juvenile offenders – this pioneer

has left a strong and significant mark on LDA and all it stands for. Dorothy received a beautiful plaque that listed her many accomplishments that have benefited children and adults with learning disabilities.

#### Anne Fleming, Virginia

A long term activist in the field of child



advocacy, Anne is very low-key about her many contributions and achievements on behalf of those with learning disabilities. As LDA president, her primary focus was the formation of a task force to resolve issues in the identification, eligibility and placement of students with learning disabilities. The result was the position paper "Definition of the Condition, Specific Learning Disabilities," which ended up being the defining model of LD identification. Anne received a beautiful plaque that listed her many accomplishments that have benefited children and adults with learning

disabilities.

### LDA Award

The LDA Award is our organization's highest honor. It is given to a person who has contributed in an outstanding manner over a long period of time to the field of learning disabilities.

Dr. Jean Lokerson, Virginia, recipient of the 2008 LDA Award, has given her life to the field of education and those she teaches. Her early years were devoted to elementary education. She was a student of Dr. William Cruickshank and did her doctoral studies under Dr. Jean Hebelers at



the University of Maryland. She received the University of Maryland Distinguished Alumni Award and is on their Advisory Board. She is a past president of DLD – and – in 1983 was on the first executive board after the founding of DLD of CEC. She continues to serve on numerous committees at all levels of CEC, DLD, and the Pioneers of CEC.

She has served LDA at all levels of state and national – and has chaired many committees, including Publications, Public Policy and Bylaws and Policy and has served as secretary of this organization. She has been an important member of LDA's Professional Advisory Board. Dr. Lokerson is an active participant in the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities for both DLD/ CEC and LDA.

A well known speaker, Jean has championed the cause of enlightened teacher education in her actions and in her writings and presentations. As a professor at Virginia Commonwealth University and as a leader in her chosen organizations, Jean is a true advocate for the partnership of teacher and parent and has made her strong mark on the field of learning disabilities.



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# LDA WASHINGTON UPDATE

## **Congressional Activities:**

As is often the case during an election year, very little controversial legislation is passed. However, Congress did pass and the President has signed the following:

- Omnibus spending bill for Fiscal Year 2008, totaling \$555 billion. The bill increased overall education funding by \$1.94 billion (+3.4%). This increase includes a \$1.1 billion (+4.6%) increase in programs under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB); a \$259 million (+ 17.3%) increase in IDEA funding; and restoration of much of the funding for Career and Technical Education.
- Medicare, Medicaid, and SCHIP (State Children's Health Insurance Program) Extension Act of 2007, which includes
  - A six month 0.5% increase in Medicare physician reimbursements, to avert a 10% decrease scheduled that would have taken effect on January 1, 2008;
  - A six-month moratorium on the proposed CMS (Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services) Medicaid regulations limiting rehabilitation options and school based administrative and transportation services;
  - An extension of the SCHIP program through March 31, 2009, which provides sufficient funding to avoid funding shortfalls in 2008.
  - A bill renaming the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) as the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

Several bills also made their way through both House and Senate and are now in conference committees. Conference committees reconcile the differences in the two versions of a bill to produce the final legislation that will be sent to the President. These bills include:

- College Opportunity and Affordability Act of 2007 (H.R. 4137; S. 1642): This bill would reauthorize the Higher Education Act. The House bill includes the Yarmuth (D-KY) amendment which would create a new program to prepare general educators

to effectively instruct students with disabilities, as well as provisions to promote the inclusion of students with disabilities in higher education.

- Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act of 2007 (H.R. 1424; S. 558), also referred to as "mental health parity," prohibits group health plans already providing mental health benefits from imposing treatment or financial limitations on mental health benefits that are different from those applied to medical/surgical services. The White House favors the Senate bill because it addresses the need to treat mental illnesses the same as physical illnesses but would not significantly raise health care costs.

## **Congress has a few bills still in the hopper awaiting action. These include the following:**

- The ADA Restoration Act (H.R. 3195; S. 1881) would override recent Supreme Court decisions. These decisions have seriously eroded the rights of people with disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act by allowing employers the latitude to determine either that a person is too disabled to do a job or is not disabled enough to be protected by the law.
- Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (currently known as the No Child Left Behind Act): Congressional education committees are still in the process of developing draft legislation. In the interim, the U.S. Department of Education has begun to issue interim administrative changes to provide additional flexibility to school districts in the NCLB accountability provisions.
- Toxic Right to Know Protection Act (S 595. H.R.1055) would undo reporting requirement roll-backs implemented by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) through a January 2007 rule change. This change would allow companies to release ten times more pollution before filing detailed reports and would create an unprecedented exemption for reporting low-level disposals of persistent bioaccumulative

toxins (PBTs), including lead and mercury.

Both House and Senate have also passed bills outlining their budget priorities for Fiscal Year 2009. These bills provide significantly higher levels of spending than the president's proposed budget released in February. Again, we are awaiting a conference committee to produce a final Budget Resolution for FY09, after which the Appropriations Committees will begin the real work of determining which programs will continue and at what level of funding.

## **Department of Education Activities:**

We are still awaiting issuance of new regulations for IDEA-Part C (Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities). It is possible that the regulations will not be released until late summer or early fall.

The 27th Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the IDEA is now available at <http://www.ed.gov/about/reports/annual/osep/2005/parts-b-c/index.html>. Volume 1 focuses on the children and students being served under IDEA. Topics covered include trends in numbers and percentages of infants, toddlers, preschool, and school-age children served; educational environments of preschool-age children; declassification of elementary school-age students; and characteristics of secondary students served for emotional disturbance. Volume 2 contains state-level data profiles.

The Department has also announced that all eligible states may now use a growth model to measure student achievement, as part of their calculation of Adequate Yearly Progress. The Department's press release, additional details about the pilot project, and a letter sent to all chief state school officers is available at <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/growthmodel/proficiency.html>.

In other action, the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights issued

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## WASHINGTON UPDATE

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a policy letter (December 2007) affirming that Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and Title II of the ADA require that qualified students with disabilities be given the same opportunities to compete for and benefit from accelerated programs and classes as are given to students without disabilities. For more information, see <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-20071226.html>.

**Supreme Court:** The U.S. Supreme Court announced it would hear the case *Huber v. Wal-Mart* in the spring of 2009. The question asked of the Court involves "reasonable accommodation" under the ADA. Specifically, the dispute is whether Wal-Mart was required to provide Huber with an equivalent job after she could no longer perform her job due to disability or whether the company simply had to allow her to compete for an equivalent job. To view the petition for a writ of certiorari, go to [http://www.scotusblog.com/movable-type/archives/07-480\\_pet.pdf](http://www.scotusblog.com/movable-type/archives/07-480_pet.pdf).

## State Activities:

**Decreasing Special Education Enrollment:**

- **Georgia:** The number of special education students enrolled in the Glynn County public schools has dropped over the past five years. According to the *New Brunswick News*, Jane Christian, special education coordinator for the district, said changes in the identification of special education students are a major factor in the decrease. "We are looking at lots of things to try with the students before we look at special education." Ms. Christian cited Response to Intervention as one technique they are using to maintain students in general education.
- **Virginia:** The Hampton Roads Pilot reported that fewer students are receiving special education services in Virginia than have in a decade. Educators said the drop probably was caused by declining student enrollment and changes to the way educators identify and help struggling learners. They are phasing in Response to Intervention across the state; however, some parents worry that RTI is simply delaying getting students needed special education

services. For students with clearly defined disabilities, parents want immediate special education services rather than first to try a series of other methods. John Willis Lloyd of the University of Virginia's Curry School of Education said there could be a silver lining in the decrease, i.e., fewer students could make special education classes more homogeneous, allowing teachers to focus on a specific disability.

**Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills:** Changes to this year's Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills for special education students have left parents and school districts worried that students' scores will drop. In the past, special education students were tested based on their instructional level. A sixth-grader, for example, could take a fourth-grade test. Schools could even exempt students from the test. In the new system, students are tested based on their grade levels as required by No Child Left Behind.



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# Outstanding Volunteers

LDA Membership Committee

Chicago, Illinois was the place to be in February of this year! LDA of America hosted an event filled conference with something for everyone. It was truly inspirational to see and hear from a variety of experts on the latest happenings in the field of learning disabilities. These experts included not only doctors, professors, and teachers but the real experts on learning disabilities among whom are parents, grandparents, and those with learning disabilities themselves. Another highlight of the conference was the recognition of some outstanding volunteers for LDA from around the country. A display was set up in the exhibit hall honoring these dedicated individuals to whom LDA is truly indebted. All states were invited to submit the names of outstanding volunteers for this special recognition. Over the next year we will be honoring some of those special people who give so much of their time and energy to further our cause. It was a delight and pleasure to meet at the conference the nominees from Indiana, Kathy and Jerry Klawiter.

## LDA of Indiana Volunteers



Kathy and Jerry Klawiter of South Bend are mainstays of LDA of Indiana. Kathy serves as the statewide Conference Director and Jerry is chairperson of the Membership Committee and works with volunteers to choose the yearly award winners for the Annual Conference. Kathy has been editor of our Newsletters for the past several years.

They have been active on the Indiana Board of Directors for a number of years, and their contributions to LDA are invaluable. We would be at a loss without their dedication and expertise! They are in Chi-

cago this week, so look for them and say, "Hello!"

Another outstanding volunteer is well known to many of us. Although she was unable to be with us in Chicago due to her illness, she was there in spirit. It is indeed a pleasure to honor Lynn Cannon from Iowa.

## IOWA is very pleased to recognize Lynne Cannon's volunteer gifts to not only her community, her state, but also to LDA!



Lynne has been involved in LDA-IA and LDA for over thirty years. She has been on the board of directors at both the state and national levels. She has also served as president of both the state and national organizations, has been a faithful member of the LDA-Iowa Executive Board for many years, and has served as our treasurer. Lynne has been on the fundraising committee and her efforts have provided financial support for many exciting projects in Iowa including a pre-school early intervention program for parents and children, funds for the prison project and Healthy Children projects. Lynne initiated a program that included the study of the effects of the mother's thyroid on children's ability to learn. This project included the production of the video "For Your Baby's Sake." You have all read her *Newsbriefs* and she has been an editor for the *LDA Journal of Learning Disabilities*.

We in Iowa are truly appreciative of our Lynne.



Last but not least, **Maine provided us with an incredible volunteer.** It is an honor to salute Sandra Cort from that great state.

Sandra Cort is a past President

and has served on the Board of Directors of the Learning Disabilities Association of Maine (LDA-ME) since 1995 (President from 1997 to 1999, VP in 1996 & again from 2000 to 2002). Sandy represented LDA-ME in the Maine Zero Mercury Campaign, and because of that work, LDA-ME was chosen as one of four lead states in the Learning Disabilities Association of America's Healthy Children's Project. Sandy is the site coordinator for the Maine Healthy Children's Project and is an active volunteer in that effort. She is also a volunteer representing LDA-ME in a collaborative of seven other environmental and health organizations called the Alliance for a Clean and Healthy Maine (Alliance), which is working to phase out persistent toxic chemicals in the State. LDA-ME and the Alliance partner organizations have supported numerous bills that passed in the Maine Legislative sessions that reduced persistent toxins in the environment, most of which are neurotoxins. She represents LDA-ME in the Learning and Developmental Disabilities Initiative, one of the main working groups of the Collaborative on Health and the Environment (CHE). Sandy serves on the Research and Public Policy committees of the Learning Disabilities Association of America. She serves on the Advisory Board of the Environmental Health Strategy Center. She is a founding member and currently the Treasurer of the Friends of the Presumpscot River, a local river advocacy organization. Sandy served for over eight years on the education committee and was a volunteer teacher at her synagogue's religious school, Congregation Bet Ha'AM. Sandy graduated from the University of South Maine with a B.S. in Art Education and taught art K-12. She co-owned, with her sister, a craft business for over 14 years and currently is a floral designer. She is the parent of two adult children with learning disabilities and is herself an adult with learning disabilities. Sandy lives with her husband, Bruce, in Auburn, Maine.

It is now time to move on and think about the great conference and exciting events that await us in Salt Lake City. Begin planning now to honor some of the outstanding volunteers from your state. We look forward to hearing from all of you!

## LDA Healthy Children Project

### States Move on Toxic Toys Legislation – LDA Affiliates Advocate for Kids

Following last year's recalls of millions of children's toys and other products because of lead-tainted paint and choking hazards, many states are moving to pass legislation that will make children's products much safer and less toxic. According to a March 25 article in the Wall Street Journal, 29 states are pursuing legislation to make children's products safer and less toxic. LDA affiliates in Maine, New Jersey, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, California and Oregon are actively involved in these efforts.

LDA advocates such as Sandy Cort in Maine, Terry Cavanaugh in New Jersey and Sue Frievalds in Minnesota – to name just a few – are providing written and oral testimony on how toxic chemicals can impair brain development in the fetus, infants and children. LDA urges other state affiliates and members to join this crucial effort to safeguard children's health now and for the future. There are unprecedented op-

portunities in Connecticut, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Hawaii, Washington, Alaska, Rhode Island, Vermont, and many other states to greatly reduce children's exposures to toxic chemicals.

Coalitions of health and environmental organizations in these states say that the lead-based recalls have created an opportunity to more broadly address the issue of toxic chemicals in products, especially those intended for children and infants. From coast to coast, these coalitions are helping to push for bills that would require manufacturers to get toxic metals and chemicals including lead, cadmium, phthalates, Bisphenol A, brominated flame retardants (PBDEs) and mercury out of children's products.

The leading state in the swiftly expanding effort to safeguard children's health is Washington, where legislators passed a far-reaching bill that would set the strictest standard in the country for lead in

children's products. The bill would reduce the allowable level of lead in toys and other products to 90 parts per million. The current federal standard is 600 parts per million, despite the recommendation of the American Academy of Pediatrics that the standard be lowered to 40 parts per million. The LDA and other national advocates for healthy brain development say there is no safe level of lead exposure for children.

The Washington state bill would also drastically limit the use of cadmium in children's products, which is a metal used in paints and plastics, and would ban phthalates, which are chemicals found in polyvinyl chloride plastic (PVC) and also in cosmetics and other personal care products. Phthalates are linked to reproductive and developmental problems.

Children's health advocates across the country are anxiously waiting for Washington's Governor, Chris Gregoire, to sign the toxics in toys bill into law. Washington recently has provided strong leadership on environmental health issues, as the first state to ban all three categories of brominated flame retardants – which harm the thyroid gland, alter the neurological system and damage the immune system. Maine quickly followed suit.

As more states introduce and pass similar legislation, the hope is that the strong state laws will push the federal government to enact national chemical policy reform, that would for the first time put the onus on chemical and product manufacturers to keep toxic chemicals out of children's products. Please contact Maureen Swanson at [mwunsch@ldaamerica.org](mailto:mwunsch@ldaamerica.org) to find out how you can join LDA in helping to keep our kids free from toxic chemicals that impair learning and development.





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## CHICAGO RESPONDS

*continued from page 1*

shared a similar pathway.

On Saturday, Ms. Dale S. Brown, Senior Manager for LD Online opened the day's events with a powerful message to adults who have learning disabilities. Again the need for inclusiveness and responsiveness was articulated, with clear testimonials and statements about achieving success through effective, supported transition processes. Ms. Brown acknowledged the significance of the development of strong self-determination skills and encouraged the use of assistive technology as individuals' transition from school to work and "Soar to Success and Independence."

President and CEO of the American Association for Persons with Disabilities, Andrew Imparato spent a few minutes sharing, from a national perspective, the positive avenues for the future for adults who have disabilities. His message strongly urged the Learning Disabilities Association of America and Affiliates to partner with other organizations in a unified and responsive effort to foster inclusiveness through economic and political empowerment.

After the Saturday headliners, conference participants had an opportunity to attend the annual "Finding Your Future: Postsecondary Opportunities Resource Fair" featuring professionals who led small discussion forums about workforce opportunities of the 21st century, processes

for career exploration and discovery, and strategies for long-term employability and sustainability. Comments from attending participants were "Superb! I learned so much." to "What a great opportunity to understand some of the options out there."

So much can be said about this year's conference – the hugs in the halls, the new friendships formed, the knowledge gained, those ah-ha moments. But for me, the message of the conference rings loudly and clearly... A renewed responsiveness to the mission of LDA – to create opportunities for the success for all individuals affected by learning disabilities and to reduce the incidence in future generations. Go out and be responsive to your community, your family, your circle of influence.

# 2009 Call for Proposals

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Learning Disabilities Association of America is seeking submissions for the 2009 conference to be held in Salt Lake City February 25-28, 2009. Anyone wishing to present a paper, conduct a workshop, provide an informational session, or make a formal presentation is invited to submit a proposal.

Deadline for submissions is **May 15, 2008**. Individuals interested in having a paper considered for the Salt Lake City conference should go to **[www.LDAAmerica.org](http://www.LDAAmerica.org)** and follow the steps for completing and submitting online.

Kristin Stang, Ph.D., 2009 LDA Program Chair