

THE INDEPENDENCE

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Save The Date!!!

**The 2015
Conference Date
has been Set!!!!**

JUNE 17 - 19, 2015
MOBILE, ALABAMA
RIVERVIEW PLAZA
HOTEL
UPDATES POSTED @
WWW.AL-APSE.ORG
OTHER SPONSORS
PENDING

Alabama APSE will hold its 2015 conference in Mobile at the Renaissance Riverview Plaza Hotel on June 17–19. Co-sponsors are currently pending. The event will begin at 1:00 p.m. on the 17th and conclude at 12 noon on the 19th. Registration and other conference information is available at www.al-apse.org. This year's theme is "Lights, Camera, Action—



Directing Your Path to Employment" The organization is currently seeking a conference cover design. For more information, email Alabama APSE at alabamaapse@aol.com. The planning committee is hard at work planning for keynote and breakout sessions.

Attendees are encouraged to make hotel reservations early. Rooms in the hotel block are \$119.00 per night. You can call the hotel directly or visit the Alabama APSE website to

access the link to reserve your room electronically. Some of the highlights for this year's event include the annual awards banquet, annual silent auction, membership breakfast, evening reception and great speakers and trainers.

Details regarding the conference will continue to be posted at www.al-apse.org as they become available. This includes registration information, awards nomination forms, etc. Continuing education will be available for Social Workers, Counselors, Nurses, Rehabilitation Counselors and CESP's.



Mr. Jeff Steinberg will be a featured keynote and entertainer at this year's conference. Jeff was born with what he describes as "handicaps." He has no arms, badly deformed legs and was told by his doctor's that he wouldn't live very long. Jeff spent most of his early life in hospitals, including Shriners' Hospital for Crippled Children in Philadelphia, PA, where he underwent orthopedic surgery, learned to walk with a brace and was fitted with his first prosthetic arm. At age nine, he was placed into The Good Shepherd Home for the Physically Handicapped in Allentown, PA, where he lived until he was 19.

At the age of 11 he states that he came to know that, "he was made to be awesome and wonderful!!!" Through the love of a local couple, he discovered the truth that became the foundation of his life: "...I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

Jeff considers himself a "Masterpiece In Progress". He considers his disabilities to be his assets, not liabilities. Jeff is now a speaker / singer, humorist and author with a very special message; that a real handicap is "...anything that keeps one from being or becoming all that they were created to be!" In addition to his keynote, Jeff will sing at the awards banquet!

Alabama APSE sponsored the CESP exam on November 17 in Montgomery. Thirty individuals sat for the exam. The results are in and we expect more people to pursue this certification in the future. The chapter expects to schedule another exam in late summer or early fall.

Fifty individuals from across the state participated in a 3-day certificate-based "Customized Employment/Job Coach Training", November 5–7, 2014 in Birmingham. The training was conducted by consultants from Virginia Commonwealth University. Alabama APSE continues to work closely with the Alabama Department of Mental Health and the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services to sponsor this training. Another session is expected to be offered in mid to late Spring.

Annual AL-APSE AWARDS

Nominations are now being accepted for the 2015 AL-APSE awards that will be presented at the conference awards banquet scheduled for Thursday evening, June 18 beginning at 6:30 p.m. The deadline to submit a nomination is May 1 and nominators will be notified by May 15. You can access the nomination form at www.al-apse.org.

Assistive Technology Workshop

February 27, 2015

9:00–11:00

Mobile ADRS Office

2419 Gordon Smith Drive

To Register Click Link:

<http://events.constantcontact.com/register/event?llr=eq8in9eab&oeidk=a07eafbytdcb51c34eb>

Flyer posted at www.al-apse.org

Silent Auction Items

AL-APSE will gladly accept donations for the annual silent auction scheduled for June 17–18, 2015 during the conference. This year's auction will fund both the Barclay and Sheehan Scholarships.

Contact Randy Phillips for more information.

Randy.phillips@rehab.alabama.gov

Shout out to Mrs. Terry Johnson, former Secretary for AL-APSE. Thanks Terry for your dedication and hard work!! Best Wishes in all your endeavors!!

Project SEARCH Alabama continues to expand and realize tremendous results. Most recently, the Alabama state team, utilizing grant funds from the Alabama Council for Developmental Disabilities hosted the first ever Project SEARCH conference. Representatives from all seven programs attended the event. There were several highlights, including the keynote address at the awards lunch from 2014 Project SEARCH graduate, Emily Grant. Emily talked about her experience as an intern in the Baldwin County program housed at Thomas Hospital. Following her successful completion, Emily obtained employment at the hospital.



Also during lunch, each Business Liaison was recognized for their support and commitment to Project SEARCH. Commissioners Jim Reddoch, Mental Health and Cary Boswell, Rehabilitation Services presented plaques to each business. Pictured left is Ms. Cindy Fafard, Huntsville Hospital with Commissioners Reddoch and Boswell.

Alabama currently has 7 Project SEARCH programs around the state and is possibly adding two additional programs in 2015–2016.

Staff from each site are scheduled to participate in a 2-day training program in January entitled "Achieving 100% Job Placement Success". This training is being conducted by Ms. Linda Emery, Alabama Project SEARCH liaison and Ms. Susie Rutkowski, Co-Founder of Project SEARCH. The overall goal of this dynamic program is employment. Programs that achieve at least 60% job placement success receive recognition each year at the national

conference.

Thanks to all of Alabama's Business Liaisons. These include: Ms. Carol Statter, Mobile and Baldwin County (Thomas Hospital and Infirmary Health), Ms. Kay Bennett and Ms. Judy Redden, Baptist South Montgomery, Ms. Angela Harrill, Birmingham Southern College, Mr. Kenneth Law and Mr. John Rinehart, Tuscaloosa VA Hospital, Cheryl Barber, Shelby Baptist Hospital in Alabaster, and Cindy Fafard, Huntsville Hospital.

ODEP's Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program

ODEP recognizes that many states desire to align their efforts to support individuals with disabilities toward an *Employment First* approach, but may not yet possess the capacity, experience or technical resources necessary to lead and facilitate such change. To address this need, ODEP initiated the *Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program* (EFSLMP) in FY2012. This is a unique Federal investment to bring about systems change that is cross-disability in scope, cross-systems in focus, and heavily entrenched in systems reform at the state level. ODEP intends to take what is learned from state experiences and use that knowledge to inform Federal public policy. The objectives of the EFSLMP are to accelerate state *Employment First* efforts; facilitate a national dialogue to spur collective action in tackling the strongest challenges impeding *Employment First* efforts; and evaluate the impacts of such investments over time to validate innovative strategies that lead to increased integrated employment outcomes for individuals with significant disabilities.

In FY2015, fifteen (15) core states will receive a combination of on-site and virtual technical assistance focused on policy & practice reforms intended to align services and funding towards a prioritization on integrated employment as the key outcome of day and employment services. The technical assistance will emphasize four key areas of systems change: provider transformation; capacity building in the use of effective practices that lead to integrated employment; employer engagement; and school-to-work transition. The EFSLMP is intended to be a results oriented partnership between the core states and ODEP. To achieve this goal, each core state signed a letter of intent outlining specific outcomes that they agree to accomplish in exchange for the technical resources provided through ODEP's EFSLMP. **Alabama** was selected as a core state and will receive the technical assistance describe above. This effort will include a collaborative effort among many state agencies that have a common goal of training and employment for people with disabilities.

The Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) is intended to improve the accessibility and accountability of the public workforce development system for individuals with disabilities [and]...continue promising practices implemented by disability program navigators, including effective deployment of staff in selected States to better serve individuals with disabilities and improve employment outcomes. — *The Appropriation Committee Senate Report 111-66 on H.R. 3292.*

Alabama was one of eight states selected in Round 4, 2013 to implement DEI and utilize Disability Resource Coordinators in Alabama Career Centers. The Alabama DRC's are located in Jasper, Anniston, Hanceville/Cullman, Alabaster, Gadsden, Talladega and Opelika. The grant was awarded to the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs and operated by the Alabama Department of Mental Health. The DEI comprises three primary components: cooperative agreements, technical assistance to the grantees and the public workforce system, and evaluation of the grantees' activities to measure their outcomes and impact on both the individuals and the system. The goal of the DEI is to improve the education, training, and employment opportunities and outcomes of youth and adults with disabilities who are unemployed, underemployed, and/or receiving Social Security disability benefits. It improves coordination and collaboration across multiple service delivery systems; builds effective state and local partnerships that leverage public and private resources; provides flexible opportunities and access to training and employment of youth and adults with disabilities; and creates systemic change. A joint effort of the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) and Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), the DEI brings together local, state and Federal agencies, as well as community-based agencies and organizations to achieve its goals. Of particular note, the DEI requires that its grantees participate in the Social Security Administration's (SSA) Ticket to Work Program to improve the coordination of services to customers of the public workforce system who also receive SSA disability benefits.

For more information on DEI email or call:
byron.white@mh.alabama.gov (334) 353-7713 or
anita.sherman@mh.alabama.gov (256) 609-8808

APSE's Public Policy Priorities include:

- ⇒ Workforce Opportunity and Innovation Act
- ⇒ Fair Wages for Workers with Disabilities Act of 2103
- ⇒ Support OFCCP Efforts to Strengthen Hiring by Federal Contractors
- ⇒ Reduce Public Support for Facility Based Services
- ⇒ Protect Medicaid
- ⇒ Support CMS Efforts to Increase Support for Employment

Samantha Wadsworth serves as the Public Policy Liaison for Alabama APSE. Employment First continues to be a priority as well and Samantha shares Alabama's progress nationally while also bringing national information back to the AL-APSE Chapter.

Selected winners of the 2014 AL-APSE awards will be considered for national awards at Philadelphia. Nominations are currently being submitted for Large Employer and Personal Achievement. Winners of the Personal Achievement Awards last year in Mobile are all still working. The winners included: Meredith Rucker, Mattie Allen, Miracle Jackson and Charles Akers. Mr. Keith Richards, Taziki's Mediterranean Café Restaurants is being nominated for the APSE Large Employer. For more information on the APSE awards or to submit a nomination yourself, visit www.apse.org.

Winners will be announced June 24th at the National Awards luncheon. Alabama has been fortunate to have multiple winners over the years. Best wishes to all our nominees.

Alabama APSE will be considering new board members at their next meeting. Priority will be for self-advocates and employers. Complimentary memberships from National APSE have been distributed.



The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services and the Alabama Department of Mental Health have successfully piloted GATE, **Gaining Access to Employment**. This collaborative project between the two state agencies is intended to braid funds to help supported employment providers move individuals from sheltered workshops or other day services into competitive employment in their communities. The Arc of Jackson County in Scottsboro served as the initial pilot agency. Other agencies are now implementing this program that proved very successful. Selected individuals receive job coaching and pre-vocational services at a selected business in their community while receiving wages through paid work experiences funded by ADRS.

The goal of GATE is employment at the completion of the paid work experience, either at the host business or at another business in the

community. This partnership utilizes both ADRS funding and Waiver funding from ADMH. Therefore, each individual participating must be a recipient of the ADMH Living at Home Waiver or ID Waiver, and must be a recipient of ADRS services. The two agencies (MH and VR) have a long history of partnering and have established strong working relationships among colleagues. For more information on GATE, contact Tina Dortch at ADRS, tina.dortch@rehab.alabama.gov or Byron White at ADMH, Byron.white@mh.alabama.gov.

Share the Power of a Wish

AL-APSE would like to wish the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation services "**Happy Birthday**" as 2015 marks their 20th anniversary of

becoming a state agency. AL-APSE has always been supported by the Department and its employees and we are excited to congratulate them for achieving this milestone!



AL-APSE would also like to express congratulations to both **Pam Mobley** and **Jennifer Smith**, VR supervisors in the Birmingham area, on their upcoming retirements. Both have been long time supporters of AL-APSE and

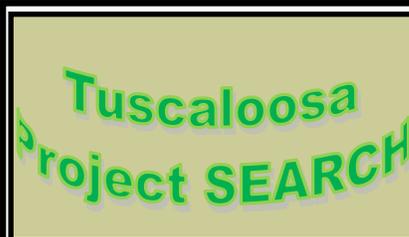
their support and participation in AL-APSE events will be missed.



The AL-APSE Conference will kick off on June 17 with its own version of Oprah, Phil, Geraldo, Sallie or choose your own! A panel of individuals from across the state will participate in this live and interactive session as they talk about their lives, challenges they've faced, and successes they've achieved. Ms. Eileen Jones, former WSFA television reporter will be the guest emcee/host. This session is a result of the favorable reviews given to "open-mic" Friday at

last year's conference.

If you know someone that you'd like to be considered to participate in this panel email Alabama APSE at alabamaapse@aol.com. Deadline for consideration is February 1.



A Big Shout Out to the Tuscaloosa Project SEARCH program located at the VA Hospital. Their open house event was held on Thursday evening, January 15. The event was very successful and very inspiring. A write up was featured in the Tuscaloosa News. This story along with a video developed by the VA was shared with the **VA Deputy**

Secretary Sloan Gibson. His response to what he read and what he saw "*Kudos to the folks at Tuscaloosa for establishing this great program and I am very pleased to see the effort to get this story told!*" **Secretary Bob McDonald**, "*We are beginning to publish more and more positive stories about VA. This is certainly one. Thanks!*" Great job Project SEARCH staff for making sure your program not only received local attention, you got it nationally as well!!

This Year 2015

Love what you see in the mirror! Make Time for Creativity! Never Say No to Adventure! Eat More Green Food! Send Snail Mail! Send Handwritten Thank Yous! Buy Less, Choose Well! Give Out Too Many Compliments! Travel! Be Kind to Strangers! Volunteer Your Time and Skills! Take a Cooking Class! Give the Present of Presence! Learn From Others! Embrace Simplicity!

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