Celebrating the 10th Annual Lighting the Way Conference

For the past 10 years, the annual Lighting the Way Conference has brought together families, educators, caregivers, service providers and advocates for a two-day conference at Augustana University in Sioux Falls. The conference provides an opportunity to learn, network, and share. In 2006, Ray Christensen, then Augustana Director of Graduate Programs/Workshops, contacted Elaine Roberts, retired special education teacher, and shared his dream of bringing entities together to offer a conference on Autism. Together, Ray and Elaine invited several individuals and groups working in the area of Autism to a meeting and the dream took shape to plan and deliver the first conference in 2007. Augustana University and South Dakota Parent Connection continue to provide leadership for the planning committee. Planning committee membership has changed over the years but the commitment to the growing needs of families and professionals impacted by autism spectrum disorders remains the primary focus. Conference programs have featured dynamic and highly acclaimed keynote speakers, along with regional, state, and local experts to deliver breakout sessions for families and professionals with information, strategies and insight across the life span. Author book signings, parent receptions, networking luncheons, pre-conference trainings, vendor displays, style shows, and expert panels have contributed to the success of the conference. The format of the conference delivers a balance of relevant content, opportunities to engage in hands-on learning, and networking events throughout the two days.

This year’s conference will feature Kari Dunn Buron and Michael John Carley as keynote speakers, various breakout sessions, a Runway of Dreams Fashion Show, a virtual conversation with Eustacia Cutler, and optional social events for making your experience both educational and fun! Please join us for the 10th Annual Lighting The Way conference June 8 & 9 at Augustana University. You can find more information for this year’s conference at http://www.augie.edu/lighting-way.

2017 Planning Committee:
B: Vicki Nelson, Aimee Deliramich, Becky Fiala, Carla Miller, Brittany Schmidt, Elaine Roberts.
F: Matt Johnson, Julie Ashowrth, Eric Kurtz
Not Pictured: Tana Buresch, Brenda Bernard, Julie Johnson-Drebsach, Karen Mahan.
Meet our Board of Directors

Rod Domke, President
Rod is the current President of the South Dakota Parent Connection Board. Rod has been on the board since September 2011. He lives in Highmore, SD with his wife and has three children.

Deb Docken, Vice President
Deb joined the SDPC board in 2013. She and her husband, Tim, reside in Sioux Falls and have three children and 2 grandchildren. In her spare time she loves spending time with family and friends doing a variety of outdoor activities such as camping, fishing and hunting. Deb loves being a part of South Dakota Parent Connection and supporting its mission of connecting families.

Kerry Larson, Secretary
Kerry currently is the board Secretary and served on the SDPC Board from 2006 to 2012 and was Board President in 2011-2012. She is a Families Planning Together Facilitator, former member of the SD Department of Education Special Education Advisory Board and completed Partners in Policymaking in 2008. She is an advocate for all children and families.

Brad Bartz, Past President
Brad has served on the Board of Directors since 2011. Brad is a parent of a child with a disability and is employed at MetaBank as a credit review officer. Providing parents with information and training is a critical function of SDPC. I am pleased to be able to serve the mission of the organization.

Dr. Wendy Parent-Johnson
Wendy is the Professor, Department of Pediatrics, and Executive Director of the Center for Disabilities, a Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, at the Sanford School of Medicine, University of South Dakota (USD). She has 36 years experience in the areas of supported and customized employment, transition from school to work, and Employment First policy and practice. A member of the APSE Board, CESP certification council, and Editor of the Journal of Rehabilitation.

Sioux Falls Ford
A BIG thank you to Sioux Falls Ford for the donation of two vehicles. We do a great deal of traveling and delivering of resources to families. New vehicles are appreciated. SF Ford has been wonderful to us over the years and we thoroughly enjoy the partnership we have established with them.
Partners in Policymaking

Twenty-two South Dakotans just spent the past six months training to be leaders. The class motto was “HOPE - Helping Others Promote Equality.” Partners in policymaking is a productive partnership between people needing and using services and those in a position to make policy and law. The training is one weekend per month, for six months, and takes dedication and commitment on the part of the participant. The training program is conducted by SD Advocacy Services (SDAS) and Sandy Stocklin Hook of Pierre is the project coordinator for the statewide training course.

Jennifer Arens, Sioux Falls; Christine Kenser, Aberdeen; Ashlee Rathbun, Ft. Pierre; Ryan Bartz, Sioux Falls; Heather Kickery, Rapid City; Julie Reinert, Spearfish; Jamie Benton, Box Elder; Adam Lalicker, Sturgis; Cassandra Rogat, Yankton; Shelly Broghammer, Colman; Mari Leichtenberg, Huron; Dedric Rose, Flandreau; Kristi Eisenbraun, Sioux Falls; Crystal Longe, Lake Andes; Lisa Stanley, Pierre; Amy Heumiller, Salem; Julie Niles, Pierre; Joshua Sudbeck, Pierre; Melissa Kelly, Rapid City; Kayla Parish, Tulare; Diana Treadway, Spearfish; Gwendolyn Watson, Mission.

Thank you to Sandy for providing the information for this article.
Thanks To You We Can Do More For Families

Connecting families of children with disabilities or special health care needs to information and resources in an environment of support, hope and respect is at the heart of our work.

Thank you to the individuals and business who supported our mission during the last year and made a difference for children.

Attention Thrivent Customers
You Can Support SDPC with a Thrivent Donation

SD Parent Connection is a Thrivent Financial approved non-profit. What that means is if you are an eligible Thrivent Financial customer you can ask Thrivent Choice to make a contribution to SDPC on your behalf. The contribution designation does not cost you as Thrivent member anything. It is a benefit you can provide to SDPC just by being an eligible Thrivent member.

To be eligible to participate members need to have $750 or more in annual premiums of qualifying insurance products, $20,000 or more in contract value of qualifying products or be in a financial volunteer leadership position.

To designate a contribution to SDPC from Thrivent is easy. Visit www.Thrivent.com (https://service.thrivent.com/apps/ThriventChoiceMemberWeb/public/organizationSearchHome), type in South Dakota Parent Connection. When the information on SDPC appears, follow the prompts to designate SDPC as a Thrivent Choice recipient. You may also call 1-800-847-4836, say “Thrivent Choice” at the prompt and you will be directed to a Thrivent Choice representative or visit with your local Thrivent financial representative.

You Can Support Our Work by Making a Donation at www.sdparent.org or Calling 1-800-640-4553!

Do You Make Purchases through Amazon? You Can Support SDPC with One Easy Click
Amazon shoppers can support SDPC as they shop. A half percent of most Amazon purchases can be donated to SDPC. Go to the link http://smile.amazon.com and choose SD Parent Connection.

visit www.sdparent.org